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The Golden Barque
and
The Weaver's Grave

By
Seumas O'Kelly

12°

"The most promising thing that has come out of Ireland for some years," says *The Manchester Guardian* of this volume. And the author has, indeed, managed to produce a rare thing in these Irish stories, which are so far from being an echo of things written before. *The Weaver's Grave* is a remarkable achievement in the grotesque, but combining too, great distinction and beauty.

G. P. Putnam's Sons

New York **London**

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Three Wonder Plays

The Dragon—Aristotle's Bellows
The Jester

By

Lady Gregory

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press

This One

Copyright, 1922
by
Augusta, Lady Gregory

Published, November 1922
Second Printing, March 1923

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Made in the United States of America

TO

ANNE AND CATHERINE

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The Dragon

THE DRAGON

PERSONS

The King.
The Queen.
The Princess Nuala.
The Dall Glic (THE BLIND WISE MAN).
The Nurse.
The Prince of the Marshes.
Manus, King of Sorcha.
Fintan, The Astrologer.
Taig.
Sibby (TAIG'S MOTHER.)
Gatekeeper.
Two Aunts of the Prince of the Marshes.
Foreign Men Bringing in Food.
The Dragon.

ACT I

ACT I

Scene: A room in the King's house at Burren. Large window at back with deep window seat. Doors right and left. A small table and some chairs.

Dall Glic: (*Coming in with tray, which he puts on table. Goes back to door.*) You can come in, King. There is no one here.

King: (*Coming in.*) That's very good. I was in dread the Queen might be in it.

Dall Glic: It is a good thought I had bringing it in here, and she gone to give learning to the Princess. She is not likely to come this side. It would be a great pity to annoy her.

King: (*Hastily swallowing a mouthful.*) Look out now the door and keep a good watch. The time she will draw upon me is when I am eating my little bite.

Dall Glic: I'll do that. What I wouldn't

see with my one eye, there's no other would see with three.

King: A month to-day since I wed with her, and well pleased I am to be back in my own place. I give you word my teeth are rusting with the want of meat. On the journey I got no fair play. She wouldn't be willing to see me nourish myself, unless maybe with the marrow bone of a wren.

Dall Glic: Sure she lays down she is but thinking of the good of your health.

King: Maybe so. She is apt to be paying too much attention to what will be for mine and for the world's good. I kept my health fair enough, and the first wife not begrudging me my enough. I don't know what in the world led me not to stop as I was.

Dall Glic: It is what you were saying, it was for the good of the Princess Nuala, and of yourself.

King: That is what herself laid down. It would be a great ease to my mind, she was saying, to have in the house with the young girl,

a far-off cousin of the King of Alban, and that had been conversation woman in his Court.

Dall Glic: So it might be too. She is a great manager of people.

King: She is that . . . I think I hear her coming. . . . Throw a cloth over the plates.

Queen: (*Coming in.*) I was in search of you.

King: I thought you were in Nuala's sunny parlour, learning her to play music and to go through books.

Queen: That is what I thought to do. But I hadn't hardly started to teach her the principles of conversation and the branches of relationships and kindred of the big people of the earth, when she plucked off the coverings I had put over the cages, and set open their doors, till the fiery birds of Sabes and the canaries of the eastern world were screeching around my head, giving out every class of cry and call.

King: So they would too.

Queen: The royal eagles stirred up till I must quit the place with their squawking, and

the enchanted swans raising up their heads and pecking at the beadwork on my gown.

King: Ah, she has a wish for the birds of the air, that are by nature light and airy the same as herself.

Queen: It is time for her to turn her mind to good sense. What's that? (*Whipping cloth from tray.*) Is it that you are eating again, and it is but one half-hour since your breakfast?

King: Ah, that wasn't a breakfast you'd call a breakfast.

Queen: Very healthy food, oaten meal flummery with whey, and a griddle cake; dandelion tea and sorrel from the field.

King: My old fathers ate their enough of wild herbs and the like in the early time of the world. I'm thinking that it is in my nature to require a good share of nourishment as if to make up for the hardships they went through.

Queen: What now have you within that pastry wall?

King: It is but a little leveret pie.

Queen: (*Poking with fork.*) Leveret!

What's this in it? The thickness of a blanket of beef; calves' sweetbreads; cocks' combs; balls mixed with livers and with spice. You to so much as taste of it, you'll be crippled and crappled with the gout, and roaring out in your pain.

King: I tell you my generations have enough done of fasting and for making little of the juicy meats of the world.

Queen: And the waste of it! Goose eggs and jellies. . . . That much would furnish out a dinner for the whole of the King of Alban's Court.

King: Ah, I wouldn't wish to be using anything at all, only for to gather strength for to steer the business of the whole of the kingdom!

Queen: Have you enough ate now, my dear? Are you satisfied?

King: I am not. I would wish for a little taste of that saffron cake having in it raisins of the sun.

Queen: Saffron! Are you raving? You to have within you any of the four-and-twenty

sicknesses of the race, it would throw it out in red blisters on your skin.

King: Let me just taste one little slab of that venison ham.

Queen: (*Poking with a fork.*) It would take seven chewings! Sudden death it would be! Leave it alone now and rise up. To keep in health every man should quit the table before he is satisfied—there are some would walk to the door and back with every bite.

King: Is it that I am to eat my meal standing, the same as a crane in a shallow, or moving from tuft to thistle like you'd see a jennet on the high road?

Queen: Well, at the least, let you drink down a share of this tansy juice. I was telling you it would be answerable to your health.

King: You are doing entirely too much for me.

Queen: Sure I am here to be comfortable to you. This house before I came into it was but a ship without a rudder! Here now, take the spoon in your hand.

Dall Glic: Leave it there, Queen, and I'll engage he'll swallow it down bye-and-bye.

Queen: Is it that *you* are meddling, Dall Glic? It is time some person took you in hand. I wonder now could that dark eye of yours be cured?

Dall Glic: It is given in that it can not, by doctors and by druids.

Queen: That is a pity now, it gives you a sort of a one-sided look. It might not be so hard a thing to put out the sight of the other.

Dall Glic: I'd sooner leave them the way they are.

Queen: I'll put a knot on my handkerchief till such time as I can give my mind to it. . . . Now, my dear (*to King*), make no more delay. It is right to drink it down after your meal. The stomach to be bare empty, the medicine might prey upon the body till it would be wore away and consumed.

King: Time enough. Let it settle now for a minute.

Queen: Here, now, I'll hold your nose the way you will not get the taste of it.

(*She holds spoon to his mouth. A ball flies in at window; he starts and medicine is spilled.*)

Princess: (*Coming in with Nurse.*) Is it true what they are telling me?

Queen: Do you see that you near hit the King with your ball, and, what is worse again, you have his medicine spilled from the spoon.

Princess: (*Patting him.*) Poor old King.

Queen: Have you your lessons learned?

Princess: (*Throwing books in the air.*) Neither line nor letter of them! Poem book! Brehon Laws! I have done with books! I am seventeen years old to-day!

Queen: There is no one would think it and you so flighty as you are.

Princess: (*To King.*) Is it true that the cook is gone away?

King: (*Aghast.*) What's that you're saying?

Queen: Don't be annoying the King's mind with such things. He should be hidden from every trouble and care.

Princess: Was it you sent him away?

Queen: Not at all. If he went it was through foolishness and pride.

Princess: It is said in the house that you annoyed him.

Queen: I never annoyed any person in my life, unless it might be for their own good. But it fails some to recognise their best friend. Just teaching him I was to pickle onion thinnings as it was done at the King of Alban's Court.

Princess: Didn't he know that before?

Queen: Whether or no, he gave me very little thanks, but turned around and asked his wages. Hurrying him and harrying him he said I was, and away with him, himself and his four-and-twenty apprentices.

King: That is bad news, and pitiful news.

Queen: Do not be troubling yourself at all. It will be easy find another.

King: It might not be easy to find so good a one. A great pity! A dinner or a supper not to be rightly dressed is apt to give no pleasure in the eating or in the bye-and-bye.

Queen: I have taken it in hand. I have

a good headpiece! I put out a call with running lads, and with the army captains through the whole of the five provinces; and along with that, I have it put up on tablets at the post office.

Princess: I am sorry the old one to be gone. To remember him is nearly the farthest spot in my memory.

Queen: (*Sharply.*) If you want the house to be under your hand only, it is best for you to settle into one of your own.

Princess: Give me the little rush cabin by the stream and I'll be content.

Queen: If you mind yourself and profit by my instruction it is maybe not a cabin you will be moving to but a palace.

Princess: I'm tired of palaces. There are too many people in them.

Queen: That is talking folly. When you settle yourself it must be in the station where you were born.

Princess: I have no mind to settle myself yet awhile.

Nurse: Ah, you will not be saying that the

time Mr. Right will come down the chimney, and will give you the marks and tokens of a king.

Queen: There might have some come looking for her before this, if it was not for you petting and pampering her the way you do, and encouraging her flightiness and follies. It is likely she will get no offers till such time as I will have taught her the manners and the right customs of courts.

Nurse: Sure I am acquainted with courts myself. Wasn't it I fostered comely Manus that is presently King of Sorcha, since his father went out of the world? And as to lovers coming to look for her! They do be coming up to this as plenty as the eye could hold them, and she refusing them, and they laying the blame upon the King!

King: That is so, they laying the blame upon myself. There was the uncle of the King of Leinster; he never sent me another car-load of asparagus from the time you banished him away.

Princess: He was a widower man.

King: As to the heir of Orkney, since the time you sent him to the right about, I never got so much as a conger eel from his hand.

Princess: As dull as a fish he was. He had a fish's eyes.

King: That wasn't so with the champion of the merings of Ulster.

Princess: A freckled man. He had hair the colour of a fox.

King: I wish he didn't stop sending me his tribute of heather beer.

Queen: It is a poor daughter that will not wish to be helpful to her father.

Princess: If I am to wed for the furnishing of my father's table, it's as good for you to wrap me in a speckled fawnskin and roast me!

(*Runs out, tossing her ball.*)

Queen: She is no way fit for marriage unless with a herd to the birds of the air, till she has a couple of years schooling.

King: It would be hard to put her back to that.

Queen: I must take it in hand. She is getting entirely too much of her own way.

Nurse: Leave her alone, and in the end it will be a good way.

Queen: To keep rules and hours she must learn, and to give in to order and good sense. (*To King.*) There is a pigeon messenger I brought from Alban I am about to let loose on this day with news of myself and of yourself. I will send with it a message to a friend I have, bidding her to make ready for Nuala a place in her garden of learning and her school.

King: That is going too fast. There is no hurry.

Queen: She is seventeen years. There is no day to be lost. I will go write the letter.

Nurse: Oh, you wouldn't send away the poor child!

Dall Glic: It would be a great hardship to send her so far. Our poor little Princess Nu!

Queen: (*Sharply.*) What are saying?

(*Dall Glic is silent.*)

King: I would not wish her to be sent out of this.

Queen: There is no other way to set her mind to sense and learning. It will be for her own good.

Nurse: Where's the use troubling her with lessons and with books that maybe she will never be in need of at all. Speak up for her, King.

King: Let her stop for this year as she is.

Queen: You are all too soft and too easy. She will turn on you and will blame you for it, and another year or two years slipped by.

Nurse: That she may!

Dall Glic: Who knows what might take place within the twelvemonth that is coming?

King: Ah, don't be talking about it. Maybe it never might come to pass.

Dall Glic: It will come to pass, if there is truth in the clouds of sky.

King: It will not be for a year, anyway. There'll be many an ebbing and flowing of the tide within a year.

Queen: What at all are you talking about?

King: Ah, where's the use of talking too much.

Queen: Making riddles you are, and striving to keep the meaning from your comrade, that is myself.

King: It's best not be thinking about the thing you would not wish, and maybe it might never come around at all. To strive to forget a threat yourself, it might maybe be forgotten by the universe.

Queen: Is it true something was threatened?

King: How would I know is anything true, and the world so full of lies as it is?

Nurse: That is so. He might have been wrong in his foretelling. What is he in the finish but an old prophecy?

Dall Glic: Is it of Fintan you are saying that?

Queen: And who, will you tell me, is Fintan?

Dall Glic: Anyone that never heard tell of Fintan never heard anything at all.

Queen: His name was not up on the tablets of big men at the King of Alban's Court, or of Britain.

Nurse: Ah, sure in those countries they are without religion or belief.

Queen: Is it that there was a prophecy?

King: Don't mind it. What are prophecies? Don't we hear them every day of the week? And if one comes true there may be seven blind and come to nothing.

Queen: (*To Dall Glic.*) I must get to the root of this, and the handle. Who, now, is Fintan?

Dall Glic: He is an astrologer, and understanding the nature of the stars.

Nurse: He wore out in his lifetime three eagles and three palm trees and three earthen dykes. It is down in a cleft of the rocks beyond he has his dwelling presently, the way he can be watching the stars through the daytime.

Dall Glic: He prophesied in a prophecy, and it is written in clean letters in the King's yew-tree box.

King: It is best to keep it out of sight. It being to be, it will be; and, if not, where's the use troubling our mind?

Queen: Sound it out to me.

Dall Glic: (*Looking from window and*

drawing curtain.) There is no story in the world is worse to me or more pitiful; I wouldn't wish any person to hear.

Nurse: Oh, take care it would come to the ears of my darling Nu!

Dall Glic: It is said by himself and the heavens that in a year from this day the King's daughter will be brought away and devoured by a scaly Green Dragon that will come from the North of the World.

Queen: A Dragon! I thought you were talking of some danger. I wouldn't give in to dragons. I never saw one. I'm not in dread of beasts unless it might be a mouse in the night-time!

King: Put it out of mind. It is likely anyway that the world will soon be ended the way it is.

Queen: I will send and search out this astrologer and will question him.

Dall Glic: You have not far to search. He is outside at the kitchen door at this minute, and as if questioning after something, and it

a half-score and seven years since I knew him to come out of his cave.

King: Do not! He might waken up the Dragon and put him in mind of the girl, for to make his own foretelling come true.

Nurse: Ah, such a thing cannot be! The poor innocent child! (*Weeps.*)

Queen: Where's the use of crying and roaring? The thing must be stopped and put an end to. I don't say I give in to your story, but that would be an unnatural death. I would be scandalized being stepmother to a girl that would be swallowed by a sea-serpent!

Nurse: Ochone! Don't be talking of it at all!

Queen: At the King of Alban's Court, one of the royal family to die over, it will be naturally on a pillow, and the dead-bells ringing, and a burying with white candles, and crape on the knocker of the door, and a flagstone put over the grave. What way could we put a stone or so much as a rose-bush over Nuala and she in the inside of a water-worm

might be ploughing its way down to the north of the world?

Nurse: Och! that is what is killing me entirely! O save her, save her.

King: I tell you, it being to be, it will be.

Queen: You may be right, so, when you would not go to the expense of paying her charges at the Royal school. But wait, now, there is a plan coming into my mind.

Nurse: There must surely be some way!

Queen: It is likely a king's daughter the beast—if there is a beast—will come questing after, and not after a king's wife.

Dall Glic: That is according to custom.

Queen: That's what I am saying. What we have to do is to join Nuala with a man of a husband, and she will be safe from the danger ahead of her. In all the inventions made by poets, for to put terror on children or to knock laughter out of fools, did any of you ever hear of a Dragon swallowing the wedding-ring?

All: We never did.

Queen: It's easy enough so. There must be no delay till Nuala will be married and wed

with someone that will bring her away out of this, and let the Dragon go hungry home!

Nurse: That she may! Isn't it a pity now she being so hard to please!

Queen: Young people are apt to be selfish and to have no thought but for themselves. She must not be hard to please when it will be to save and to serve her family and to keep up respect for their name. Here she is coming.

Nurse: Ah, you would not tell her! You would not put the dear child under the shadow of such a terror and such a threat!

King: She must not be told. I never could bear up against it.

(*Nuala comes in.*)

Queen: Look now at your father the way he is.

Princess: (*Touching his hand.*) What is fretting you?

Queen: His heart as weighty as that the chair near broke under him.

Princess: I never saw you this way before.

Queen: And all on the head of yourself!

Princess: I am sorry, and very sorry, for that.

Queen: He is loth to say it to you, but he is tired and wore out waiting for you to settle with some match. See what a troubled look he has on his face.

Princess: (*To King.*) Is it that you want me to leave you? (*He gives a sob.*) (*To Dall Glic.*) Is it the Queen urged him to this?

Dall Glic: If she did, it was surely for your good.

Nurse: Oh, my child and my darling, let you strive to take a liking to some good man that will come!

Princess: Are you going against me with the rest?

Nurse: You know well I would never do that!

Princess: Do you, father, urge me to go?

King: They are in too big a hurry. Why wouldn't they wait a while, for a quarter, or three-quarters of a year.

Princess: Is that all the delay I am given,

and the term is set for me, like a servant that would be banished from the house?

King: That's not it. That's not right. I would never give in to let you go . . . if it wasn't . . .

Princess: I know. (*Stands up.*) For my own good!

(*Trumpet outside.*)

Gatekeeper: (*Coming in.*) There is company at the door.

Queen: Who is it?

Gatekeeper: Servants, and a company of women, and one that would seem to be a Prince, and young.

Princess: Then he is come asking me in marriage.

Dall Glic: Who is he at all?

Gatekeeper: They were saying he is the son of the King of the Marshes.

King: Go bring him in.

(*Gatekeeper goes.*)

Dall Glic: That's right! He has great riches and treasure. There are some say he is the first match in Ireland.

Nurse: He is not. If his father has a copper crown, and our own King a silver one, it is the King of Sorcha has a crown of gold! The young King of Sorcha that is the first match.

Dall Glic: If he is, this one is apt to be the second first.

Queen: Do you hear, Nuala, what luck is flowing to you?

Dall Glic: Do not now be turning your back on him as you did to so many.

Princess: No; whoever he is, it is likely I will not turn away from this one.

Queen: Go now and ready yourself to meet him.

Princess: Am I not nice enough the way I am?

Queen: You are not. The King of Alban's daughter has hair as smooth as if a cow had licked it.

(*Princess goes.*)

Gatekeeper: Here is the Prince of the Marshes!

(*Enter Prince, very young and timid, an old lady on each side slightly in advance of him.*)

King: A great welcome before you. . . . . And who may these be?

Prince: Seven aunts I have . . .

First Aunt: (*Interrupting.*) If he has, there are but two of us have come along with him.

Second Aunt: For to care him and be company for him on his journey, it being the first time he ever quitted home.

Queen: This is a great honour. Will you take a chair?

First Aunt: Leave that for the Prince of the Marshes. It is away from the draught of the window.

Second Aunt: We ourselves are in charge of his health. I have here his eel-skin boots for the days that will be wet under foot.

First Aunt: And I have here my little bag of cures, with a cure in it that would rise the body out of the grave as whole and as sound as the time you were born.

(*Lays it down.*)

King: (*To Prince.*) It is many a day your father and myself were together in our early time. What way is he? He was farther out in age than myself.

Prince: He is . . .

First Aunt: (*Interrupting.*) He is only middling these last years. The doctors have taken him in hand.

King: He was more for fowling, and I was more for horses—before I increased so much in girth. Is it for horses you are, Prince?

Prince: I didn't go up on one up to this.

First Aunt: Kings and princes are getting scarce. They are the most class is wearing away, and it is right for them keep in mind their safety.

Second Aunt: The Prince has no need to go upon a horse, where he has always a coach at his command.

King: It is fowling that suits you so?

Prince: I would be well pleased . . .

First Aunt: There is great danger going

out fowling with a gun that might turn on you after and take your life.

Second Aunt: Why would the Prince go into danger, having servants that will go following after birds?

Queen: He is likely waiting till his enemies will make an attack upon the country to defend it.

First Aunt: There is a good dyke around about the marshes, and a sort of quaking bog. It is not likely war will come till such time as it will be made by the birds of the air.

King: Well, we must strive to knock out some sport or some pleasure.

Prince: It was not on pleasure I was sent.

First Aunt: That's so, but on business.

Second Aunt: Very weighty business.

King: Let the lad tell it out himself.

Prince: I hope there is no harm in me coming hither. I would be loth to push on you . . .

First Aunt: We thought it was right, as he was come to sensible years . . .

King: Stop a minute, ma'am, give him his time.

Prince: My father . . . and his counsellors . . . and my seven aunts . . . that said it would be right for me to join with a wife.

Queen: They showed good sense in that.

Prince: (*Rapidly.*) They bade me come and take a look at your young lady of a Princess to see would she be likely to be pleasing to them.

First Aunt: That's it, and that is what brought ourselves along with him—to see would we be satisfied.

King: I don't know. The girl is young—she's young.

First Aunt: It is what we were saying, that might be no drawback. It might be easier train her in our own ways, and to do everything that is right.

King: Sure we are all wishful to do the thing that is right, but it's sometimes hard to know.

Second Aunt: Not in our place. What the King of the Marshes would not know, his counsellors and ourselves would know.

Queen: It will be very answerable to the Princess to be under such good guidance.

First Aunt: For low people and for middling people it is well enough to follow their own opinion and their will. But for the Prince's wife to have any choice or any will of her own, the people would not believe her to be a *real* princess.

(*Princess comes to door, listening unseen.*)

King: Ah, you must not be too strict with a girl that has life in her.

Prince: My seven aunts that were saying they have a great distrust of any person that is lively.

First Aunt: We would rather than the greatest beauty in the world get him a wife who would be content to stop in her home.

(*Princess comes in very stately and with a fine dress. She curtseys. Aunts curtsey and sit down again. Prince bows uneasily and sidles away.*)

First Aunt: Will you sit, now, between the two of us?

Princess: It is more fitting for a young girl

to stay in her standing in the presence of a king's kindred and his son, since he is come so far to look for me.

Second Aunt: That is a very nice thought.

Princess: My far-off grandmother, the old people were telling me, never sat at the table to put a bit in her mouth till such time as her lord had risen up satisfied. She was that obedient to him that if he had bidden her, she would have laid down her hand upon red coals.

(*Prince looks bored and fidgets.*)

First Aunt: Very good indeed.

Princess: That was a habit with my grandmother. I would wish to follow in her ways.

King: This is some new talk.

Queen: Stop; she is speaking fair and good.

Princess: A little verse, made by some good wife, I used to be learning. "I always should: Be very good: At home should mind: My husband kind: Abroad obey: What people say."

First Aunt: (*Getting up.*) To travel the world, I never thought to find such good sense before me. Do you hear that, Prince?

Prince: Sure I often heard yourselves shaping that sort.

Second Aunt: I'll engage the royal family will make no objection to this young lady taking charge of your house.

Princess: I can do that! (*Counts on fingers.*) To send linen to the washing-tub on Monday, and dry it on Tuesday, and to mangle it Wednesday, and starch it Thursday, and iron it Friday, and fold it in the press against Sunday!

Second Aunt: Indeed there is little to learn you! And on Sundays, now, you will go driving in a painted coach, and your dress sewed with gold and with pearls, and the poor of the world envying you on the road.

Queen: (*Claps hands.*) There is no one but must envy her, and all that is before her for her lifetime!

First Aunt: Here is the golden arm-ring the Prince brought for to slip over your hand.

Second Aunt: It was put on all our generations of queens at the time of the making of their match.

Princess: (*Drawing back her hand.*) Mine is not made yet.

First Aunt: Didn't you hear me saying, and the Prince saying, there is nothing could be laid down against it.

Princess: There is one thing against it.

Queen: Oh, there can be nothing worth while!

Princess: A thing you would think a great drawback and all your kindred would think it.

Queen: (*Rapidly.*) There is nothing, but maybe that she is not so tall as you might think, through the length of the heels of her shoes.

Second Aunt: We would put up with that much.

Princess: (*Rapidly.*) It is that there was a spell put upon me—by a water-witch that was of my kindred. At some hours of the day I am as you see me, but at other hours I am changed into a sea-filly from the Country-under-Wave. And when I smell salt on the west wind I must race and race and race. And when I hear the call of the gulls or the sea-eagles over my head, I must leap up to meet them till I can hardly

tell what is my right element, is it the high air or is it the loosened spring-tide!

Queen: Stop your nonsense talk. She is gone wild and raving with the great luck that is come to her!

(*Prince has stood up, and is watching her eagerly.*)

Princess: I feel a wind at this very time that is blowing from the wilderness of the sea, and I am changing with it. . . . There. (*Pulls down her hair.*) Let my mane go free! I will race you, Prince, I will race you! The wind of March will not overtake me, Prince, and I running on the top of the white waves!

(*Runs out; Prince entranced, rushes to door.*)

Aunts: (*Catching hold of him.*) Are you going mad wild like herself?

Prince: Oh, I will go after her!

First Aunt: (*Clutching him.*) Do not! She will drag you to destruction.

Prince: (*Struggling to door.*) What matter! Let me go or she will escape me! (*Shak-*

ing himself free.) I will never stop till I come to her.

(*He rushes out, Second Aunt still holding on to him.*)

First Aunt: What at all has come upon him? I never knew him this way before!

(*She trots after him.*)

Princess: (*Comes leaping in by window.*) They are gone running the road to Muckanish! But they won't find me!

Queen: You have a right to be ashamed of yourself and your play-game. It's easy for you to go joking, having neither cark nor care: that is no way to treat the second best match in Ireland!

King: You were saying you had your mind made up to take him.

Princess: It failed me to do it! Himself and his counsellors and his seven aunts!

Queen: He will give out that you are crazed and mad.

Princess: He will be thankful to his life's end to have got free of me!

King: I don't know. It seemed to me he

was better pleased with you in the finish than in the commencement. But I'm in dread his father may not be well pleased.

Princess: (*Patting him.*) Which now of the two of you is the most to be pitied? He to have such a timid son or you to have such an unruly daughter?

Queen: It is likely he will make an attack on you. There was a war made by the King of Britain on the head of a terrier pup that was sent to him and that made away on the road following hares. It's best for you to make ready to put yourself at the head of your troop.

King: It's long since I went into my battle dress. I'm in dread it would not close upon my chest.

Queen: Ah, it might, so soon as you would go through a few hardships in the fight.

King: If the rest of Adam's race was of my opinion there'd be no fighting in the world at all.

Queen: It is this child's stubbornness is leading you into it. Go out, Nuala, after the

Prince. Tell him you are sorry you made a fool of him.

Princess: He was that before—thinking to put me sitting and sewing in a cushioned chair, listening to stories of kings making a slaughter of one another.

Queen: Tell him you have changed your mind, that you were but funning; that you will wed with him yet.

Princess: I would sooner wed with the King of Poison! I to have to go to his kingdom, I'd sooner go earning my wages footing turf, with a skirt of heavy flannel and a dress of the grey frieze! Himself and his bogs and his frogs!

Queen: I tell you it is time for you to take a husband.

Princess: You said that before! And I was giving in a while ago, and I felt the blood of my heart to be rising against it! And I will not give in to you again! It is my own business and I will take my own way.

Queen: (*To King.*) This is all one with the raving of a hag against heaven!

King: What the Queen is saying is right. Try now and come around to it.

Princess: She has set you against me with her talk!

Queen: (*To King.*) It is best for you to lay orders on her.

Princess: The King is not under your orders!

Queen: You are striving to make him give in to your own!

King: I will take orders from no one at all!

Queen: Bid her go bring back the Prince.

Princess: I say that I will not!

Queen: She is standing up against you! Will you give in to that?

King: I am bothered with the whole of you! I will give in to nothing at all!

Queen: Make her do your bidding so.

King: Can't you do as you are told?

Princess: This concerns myself.

King: It does, and the whole of us.

Princess: Do you think you can force me to wed?

King: I do think it, and I will do it.

Princess: It will fail you!

King: It will not! I was too easy with you up to this.

Princess: Will you turn me out of the house?

King: I will give you my word, it is little but I will!

Princess: Then I have no home and no father! It is to my mother you must give an account. You know well it is with the first wife you will go at the Judgment!

Queen: Is it that you would make threats to the King? And put insults upon myself? Now she is daring and defying you! Let you put an end to it!

King: I will do that! (*Stands up.*) I swear by the oath my people swear by, the seven things common to us all; by sun and moon; sea and dew; wind and water; the hours of the day and night, I will give you in marriage and in wedlock to the first man that will come into the house!

Princess: (*Shrinking as from a blow.*) It is the Queen has done this.

Queen: I will give you out the reason, and see will you put blame on me or praise!

Nurse: Oh, let you stop and not draw it down upon her!

Queen: It is right for me to tell it; it is true telling! You not to be married and wed by this day twelvemonth, there will be a terrible thing happen you . . .

Nurse: Be quiet! Don't you see Fintan himself looking in the window!

King: Fintan! What is it bring you here on this day?

Fintan: (*A very old man in strange clothes at window.*) What brings me is to put my curse upon the whole tribe of kitchen boys that are gone and vanished out of this, without bringing me my request, that was a bit of rendered lard that would limber the swivel of my spy-glass, that is clogged with the dripping of the cave.

Nurse: And you have no bad news?

Queen: Nothing to say on the head of the Princess, this being, as it is, her birthday?

Fintan: What birthday? This is not a

birthday that signifies. It is the next will be the birthday will be concerned with the great story that is foretold.

Queen: It is right for her to know it.

King: It is not! It is not!

Princess: Whatever the story is, let me know it, and not be treated as a child that is without courage or sense.

Fintan: It's long till I'll come out from my cleft again, and getting no peace or quiet on the ridge of the earth. It is laid down by the stars that cannot lie, that on this day twelve-month, you yourself will be ate and devoured by a scaly Green Dragon from the North!

END OF ACT I.

ACT II

ACT II

Scene: The Same. Princess and Nurse.

Nurse: Cheer up now, my honey bird, and don't be fretting.

Princess: It is not easy to quit fretting, and the terrible story you are after telling me of all that is before and all that is behind me.

Nurse: They had no right at all to go make you aware of it. The Queen has too much talk. An unlucky stepmother she is to you!

Princess: It is well for me she is here. It is well I am told the truth, where the whole of you were treating me like a child without sense, so giddy I was and contrary, and petted and humoured by the whole of you. What memory would there be left of me and my little life gone by, but of a headstrong, unruly child with no thought but for myself.

Nurse: No, but the best in the world you

are; there is no one seeing you pass by but would love you.

Princess: That is not so. I was wild and taking my own way, mocking and humbugging.

Nurse. I never will give in that there is no way to save you from that Dragon that is foretold to be your destruction. I would give the four divisions of the world, and Ireland along with them, if I could see you pelting your ball in at the window the same as an hour ago!

Princess: Maybe you will, so long as it will hurt nobody.

Nurse: Ah, sure it's no wonder there to be the tracks of tears upon your face, and that great terror before you.

Princess: I will wipe them away! I will not give in to danger or to dragons! No one will see a dark face on me. I am a king's daughter of Ireland, I did not come out of a herd's hut like Deirdre that went sighing and lamenting till she was put to death, the world being sick and tired of her complaints, and her finger at her eye dripping tears!

Nurse: That's right, now. You had always great courage.

Princess: There is like a change within me. You never will hear a cross word from me again. I would wish to be pleasant and peaceable until such time . . .

(*Puts handkerchief to eyes and goes.*)

Dall Glic: (*Coming in.*) The King is greatly put out with all he went through, and the way the passion rose in him a while ago.

Nurse: That he may be twenty times worse before he is better! Showing such fury towards the innocent child the way he did!

Dall Glic: The Queen has brought him to the grass plot for to give him his exercise, walking his seven steps east and west.

Nurse: Hasn't she great power over him to make him do that much?

Dall Glic: I tell you I am in dread of her myself. Some plan she has for making my two eyes equal. I vexed her someway, and she got queer and humpy, and put a lip on herself, and said she would take me in hand. I declare I never will have a minute's ease thinking of it.

Nurse: The King should have done his seven steps, for I hear her coming.

(*Dall Glic goes to recess of window.*)

Queen: (*Coming in.*) Did you, Nurse, ever at any time turn and dress a dinner?

Nurse: (*Very stiff.*) Indeed I never did. Any house I ever was in there was a good kitchen and well attended, the Lord be praised!

Queen: Ah, but just to be kind and to oblige the King.

Nurse: Troth, the same King will wait long till he'll see any dish I will ready for him! I am not one that was reared between the flags and the oven in the corner of the one room! To be a nurse to King's children is my trade, and not to go stirring mashes, for hens or for humans!

Queen: I heard a crafty woman lay down one time there was no way to hold a man, only by food and flattery.

Nurse: Sure any mother of children walking the road could tell you that much.

Queen: I went maybe too far urging him not to lessen so much food the way he did. I

only thought to befriend him. But now he is someway upset and nothing will rightly smooth him but to be thinking upon his next meal; and what it will be I don't know, unless the berries of the bush.

Dall Glic: (*Leaning out of the window.*) Here! Hi! Come this way!

Queen: Who are you calling to?

Dall Glic: It is someone with the appearance of a cook.

Queen: Are you saying it is a cook? That now will put the King in great humour!

(*Manus appears at the window.*)

Nurse: (*Looking at him.*) I wouldn't hardly think he'd suit. He has a sort of innocent look. I wouldn't say him to be a country lad. I don't know is he fitted to go readying meals for a royal family, and the King so wrathful if they do not please him as he is. And as to the Princess Nu! There to be the size of a hayseed of fat overhead on her broth, she'd fall in a dead faint.

Manus: I'll go on so.

Queen: No, no. Bring him in till I'll take a look at him!

Manus: (*Coming inside.*) I am a lad in search of a master.

Manus: (*Inside.*) I am a lad in search of a master.

Queen: And I myself that am wanting a cook.

Manus: I got word of that and I going the road.

Queen: You would seem to be but a young lad.

Manus: I am not very far in age to-day. But I'll be a day older to-morrow.

Queen: In what country were you born and reared?

Manus: I came from over, and I am coming hither.

Queen: What wages now would you be asking?

Manus: Nothing at all unless what you think I will have earned at the time I will be leaving your service.

Queen: That is very right and fair. I hope

you will not be asking too much help. The last cook had a whole fleet of scullions that were no use but to chatter and consume.

Manus: I am asking no help at all but the help of the ten I bring with me.

(*Holds up fingers.*)

Queen: That will be a great saving in the house! Can I depend upon you now not to be turning to your own use the King's ale and his wine?

Manus: If you take me to be a thief I will go upon my road. It was no easier for me to come than to go out again.

Queen: (*Holding him.*) No, now, don't be so proud and thinking so much of yourself. If I give you trial here I would wish you to be ready to turn your hand to this and that, and not be saying it is or is not your business.

Manus: My business is to do as the King wishes.

Queen: That's right. That is the way the servants were in the palace of the King of Alban.

Manus: That's the way I was myself in the King's house of Sorcha.

Queen: Are you saying it is from that place you are come? Sure that should be a great household! The King of Sorcha, they were telling me, has seven castles on land and seven on the sea, and provision for a year and a day in every one of them.

Manus: That might be. I never was in more than one of them at the one time.

Queen: Anyone that has been in that place would surely be fitting here. Keep him, Nurse! Don't let him make away from us till I will go call the King!

(*Goes out.*)

Nurse: Sure it was I myself that fostered the young King of Sorcha and reared him in my lap! What way is he at all? My lovely child! Give me news of him!

Manus: I will do that . . .

Nurse: To hear of him would delight me!

Manus: It is I that can tell you. . . .

Nurse: It is himself should be a grand king!

Manus: Listen till you hear! . . .

Nurse: His father was good and his mother was good, and it's likely, himself will be the best of all!

Manus: Be quiet now and hearken! . . .

Nurse: I remember well the first day I saw him in the cradle, two and a score of years back! Oh, it is glad, and very glad, I'll be to get word of him!

Manus: He is come to sensible years. . . .

Nurse: A golden cradle it was and it standing on four golden balls the very round of the sun!

Manus: He is out of his cradle now. (*Shakes her shoulder.*) Let you hearken! He is in need of your help.

Nurse: He'll get it, he'll get it. I doted down on that child! The best to laugh and to roar!

Manus: (*Putting hand on her mouth.*) Will you be silent, you hag of a nurse? Can't you see that I myself am Manus, the new King of Sorcha?

Nurse: (*Starting back.*) Do you say that? And how's every bit of you? Sure I'd know

you in any place. Stand back till I'll get the full of my eyes of you! Like the father you are, and you need never be sorry to be that! Well, I said to myself and you looking in at the window, I would not believe but there's some drop of kings' blood in that lad!

Manus: That was not what you said to me!

Nurse: And wasn't the journey long on you from Sorcha, that is at the rising of the sun? Is it your foot-soldiers and your bullies you brought with you, or did you come with your hound and your deer-hound and with your horn?

Manus: There was no one knew of my journey. I came bare alone. I threw a shell in the sea and made a boat of it, and took the track of the wild duck across the mountains of the waves.

Nurse: And where in the world wide did you get that dress of a cook?

Manus: It was at a tailor's place near Oughtmana. There was no one in the house but the mother. I left my own clothes in her charge and my purse of gold; I brought noth-

ing but my own blue sword. (*Throws open blouse and shows it.*) She gave me this suit, where a cook from this house had thrown it down in payment for a drink of milk. I have no mind any person should know I am a king. I am letting on to be a cook.

Nurse: I would sooner you to come as a champion seeking battle, or a horseman that had gone astray, or so far as a poet making praises or curses according to his treatment on the road. It would be a bad day I would see your father's son taken for a kitchen boy.

Manus: I was through the world last night in a dream. It was dreamed to me that the King's daughter in this house is in a great danger.

Nurse: So she is, at the end of a twelvemonth.

Manus: My warning was for this day. Seeing her under trouble in my dream, my heart was hot to come to her help. I am here to save her, to meet every troublesome thing that will come at her.

Nurse: Oh, my heavy blessing on you doing that!

Manus: I was not willing to come as a king, that she would feel tied and bound to live for if I live, or to die with if I should die. I am come as a poor unknown man, that may slip away after the fight, to my own kingdom or across the borders of the world, and no thanks given him and no more about him, but a memory of the shadow of a cook!

Nurse: I would not think that to be right, and you the last of your race. It is best for you to tell the King.

Manus: I lay my orders on you to tell no one at all.

Nurse: Give me leave but to *whisper* it to the Princess Nu. It's ye would be the finest two the world ever saw. You will not find her equal in all Ireland!

Manus: I lay it as crosses and as spells on you to say no word to her or to any other that will make known my race or my name. Give me now your oath.

Nurse: (*Kneeling.*) I do, I do. But they will know you by your high looks.

Manus: Did you yourself know me a while ago?

Nurse: (*Getting up.*) Oh, they're coming! Oh, my poor child, what way will you that never handled a spit be able to make out a dinner for the King?

Manus: This silver whistle, that was her pipe of music, was given to me by a queen among the Sidhe that is my godmother. At the sound of it there will come through the air any earthly thing I wish for, at my command.

Nurse: Let it be a dinner so.

Manus: So it will come, on a green tablecloth carried by four swans as white as snow. The freshest of every meat, the oldest of every drink, nuts from the trees in Adam's Paradise!

(*King, Queen, Princess, Dall Glic come in. Princess sits on window sill.*)

Queen: (*To King.*) Here now, my dear. Wasn't I telling you I would take all trouble from your mind, and that I would not be without finding a cook for you?

King: He came in a good hour. The want of a right dinner has downed kingdoms before this.

Queen: Travelling he is in search of service from the kings of the earth. His wages are in no way out of measure.

King: Is he a good hand at his trade?

Queen: Honest he is, I believe, and ready to give a hand here and there.

King: What way does he handle flesh, I'd wish to know? And all that comes up from the tide? Bream, now; that is a fish is very pleasant to me—stewed or fried with butter till the bones of it melt in your mouth. There is nothing in sea or strand but is the better of a quality cook—only oysters, that are best left alone, being as they are all gravy and fat.

Queen: I didn't question him yet about cookery.

King: It's seldom I met a woman with right respect for food, but for show and silly dishes and trash that would leave you in the finish as dwindled as a badger on St. Bridget's day.

Queen: If this youth of a young man was

able to give satisfaction at the King of Sorcha's Court, I am sure that he will make a dinner to please yourself.

Manus: I will do more than that. I will dress a dinner that will please *my*self.

Princess: (*Clapping hands.*) Very well said!

King: Sound out now some good dishes such as you used to be giving in Sorcha, and the Queen will put them down in a line of writing, that I can be thinking about them till such time as you will have them readied.

Queen: There are sheeps' trotters below; you might know some tasty way to dress them.

Manus: I do surely. I'll put the trotters within a fowl, and the fowl within a goose, and the goose in a suckling pig, and the suckling pig in a fat lamb, and the lamb in a calf, and the calf in a Maderalla . . .

King: What now is a Maderalla?

Manus: He is a beast that saves the cook trouble, swallowing all those meats one after another—in Sorcha.

King: That should be a very pretty dish.

Let you go make a start with it the way we will not be famished before nightfall. Bring him, Dall Glic, to the larder.

Dall Glic: I'm in dread it's as good for him to stop where he is.

King: What are you saying?

Dall Glic: Those lads of apprentices that left nothing in it only bare hooks.

Nurse: It is the Queen would give no leave for more provision to come in, saying there was no one to prepare it.

Manus: If that is so, I will be forced to lay my orders on the Hawk of the Grey Rock and the Brown Otter of the Stream to bring in meat at my bidding.

King: Hurry on so.

Queen: I myself will go and give you instructions what way to use the kitchen.

Manus: Not at all! What I do I'd as lief do in your own royal parlour! (*Blows whistle; two dark-skinned men come in with vessels.*) Give me here those pots and pans!

Queen: What now is about to take place?

Dall Glic: I not to be blind, I would say those to be very foreign-looking men.

King: It would seem as if the world was grown to be very queer.

Queen: So it is, and the mastery being given to a cook.

Manus: So it should be too! It is the King of Shades and Shadows would have rule over the world if it wasn't for the cooks!

King: There's some sense in that now.

(*Strange men are moving and arranging baskets and vessels.*)

Manus: There was respect for cooks in the early days of the world. What way did the Sons of Tuireann get their death but going questing after a cooking spit at the bidding of Lugh of the Long Hand! And if a spit was worthy of the death of heroes, what should the man be worth that is skilled in turning it? What is the difference between man and beast? Beast and bird devour what they find and have no power to change it. But we are Druids of those mysteries, having magic and virtue to turn hard grain to tender cakes, and the very

skin of a grunting pig to crackling causing quarrels among champions, and it singing upon the coals. A cook! If I am I am not without good generations before me! Who was the first old father of us, roasting and reddening the fruits of the earth from hard to soft, from bitter to kind, till they are fit for a lady's platter? What is it leaves us in the hard cold of Christmas but the robbery from earth of warmth for the kitchen fire of (*takes off cap*) the first and foremost of all master cooks—the Sun!

Princess: You are surely not ashamed of your trade!

Manus: To work now, to work. I'll engage to turn out a dinner fit for Pharaoh of Egypt or Pharamond King of the Franks! Here, Queen, is a silver-breast phœnix—draw out the feathers—they are pure silver—fair and clean. (*Queen plucks eagerly.*) King, take your golden sceptre and stir this pot.

(*Gives him one.*)

King: (*Interested.*) What now is in it?

Manus: A broth that will rise over the side

and be consumed and split if you stop stirring it for one minute only! (*King stirs furiously.*) Princess (*She is looking on and he goes over to her*), there are honey cakes to roll out, but I will not ask you to do it in dread that you might spoil the whiteness . . .

Princess: I have no mind to do it.

Manus: Of the flour!

Princess: Give them here.

(*Rolls them out indignantly.*)

Manus: That is right. Take care, King, would the froth swell over the brim.

Princess: It seems to me you are doing but little yourself.

Manus: I will turn now and . . . . boil these eggs.

(*Takes some on a plate; they roll off.*)

Princess: You have broken them.

Manus: (*Disconcerted.*) It was to show you a good trick, how to make them sit up on the narrow end.

Princess: That is an old trick in the world.

Manus: Every trick is an old one, but with a change of players, a change of dress, it comes

out as new as before. Princess (*speaks low*), I have a message to give you and a pardon to ask.

Princess: Give me out the message.

Manus: Take courage and keep courage through this day. Do not let your heart fail. There is help beside you.

Princess: It has been a troublesome day indeed. But there is a worse one and a great danger before me in the far away.

Manus: That danger will come to-day, the message said in the dream. Princess, I have a pardon to ask you. I have been playing vanities. I think I have wronged you doing this. It was surely through no want of respect.

Gatekeeper: (*Coming in.*) There is word come from Ballyvelehan there is a coach and horses facing for this place over from Oughtmana.

Queen: Who would that be?

Gatekeeper: Up on the hill a woman was, brought word it must be some high gentleman. She could see all colours in the coach, and flowers on the horse's heads.

(*Goes out.*)

Dall Glic: That is good hearing. I was in dread some man we would have no welcome for would be the first to come in this day.

Queen: Not a fear of it. I had orders given to the Gateman who he would and would not keep out. I did that the very minute after the King making his proclamation and his law.

King: Pup, pup. You need not be drawing that down.

Queen: It is well you have myself to care you and to turn all to good. I gave orders to the Gateman, I say, no one to be let in to the door unless carriage company, no other ones, even if they should wipe their feet upon the mat. I notched that in his mind, telling him the King was after promising the Princess Nu in marriage to the first man that would come into the house.

Manus: The King gave out that word?

Queen: I am after saying that he did.

Dall Glic: Come along, lad. Don't be putting ears on yourself.

Manus: I ask the King did he give out that promise as the Queen says?

King: I have but a poor memory.

Nurse: The King did say it within the hour, and swore to it by the oath of his people, taking contracts of the sun and moon of the air!

Dall Glic: What is it to you if he did? Come on, now.

Manus: No. This is a matter that concerns myself.

Queen: How do you make that out?

Manus: You, that called me in, know well that I was the first to come into the house.

Queen: Ha, ha! You have the impudence! It is a *man* the King said. He was not talking about cooks.

Manus: (*To the King.*) I am before you as a serving lad, and you are a King in Ireland. Because you are a King and I your hired servant you will not refuse me justice. You gave your word.

King: If I did it was in haste and in vexation, and striving to save her from destruction.

Manus: I call you to keep to your word and to give your daughter to no other one.

Queen: Speak out now, Dall Glic, and give your opinion and your advice.

Dall Glic: I would say that this lad going away would be no great loss.

Manus: I did not ask such a thing, but as it has come to me I will hold to my right.

Queen: It would be right to throw him to the hounds in the kennel!

Manus: (*To King.*) I leave it to the judgment of your blind wise man.

Queen: (*To Dall Glic.*) Take care would you offend myself or the King!

Manus: I put it on you to split justice as it is measured outside the world.

Dall Glic: It is hard for me to speak. He has laid it hard on me. My good eye may go asleep, but my blind eye never sleeps. In the place where it is waking, an honourable man, king or beggar, is held to his word.

King: Is it that I must give my daughter to a lad that owns neither clod nor furrow?

Whose estate is but a shovel for the ashes and a tongs for the red coals.

Queen: It is likely he is urged by the sting of greed—it is but riches he is looking for.

King: I will not begrudge him his own asking of silver and of gold!

Manus: Throw it out to the beggars on the road! I would not take a copper half-penny! I'll take nothing but what has come to me from your own word!

(*King bows his head.*)

Princess: (*Coming forward.*) Then this battle is not between you and an old king that is feeble, but between yourself and myself.

Manus: I am sorry, Princess, if it must be a battle.

Princess: You can never bring me away against my will.

Manus: I said no word of doing that.

Princess: You think, so, I will go with you of myself? The day I will do that will be the day you empty the ocean!

Manus: I will not wait longer than to-day.

Princess: Many a man waited seven years for a king's daughter!

Manus: And another seven—and seven generations of hags. But that is not my nature. I will not kneel to any woman, high or low, or crave kindness that she cannot give.

Princess: Then I can go free!

Manus: For this day I take you in my charge. I cross and claim you to myself, unless a better man will come.

Princess: I would think it easier to find a better man than one that would be worse to me!

Manus: If one should come that you think to be a better man, I will give you your own way.

Princess: It is you being in the world at all that is my grief.

Manus: Time makes all things clear. You did not go far out in the world yet, my poor little Princess.

Princess: I would be well pleased to drive you out through the same world!

Manus: With or without your goodwill, I

will not go out of this place till I have carried out the business I came to do.

Dall Glic: Is it the falling of hailstones I hear or the rumbling of thunder, or is it the trots of horses upon the road?

Queen: (*Looking out.*) It is the big man that is coming—Prince or Lord or whoever he may be. (*To Dall Glic.*) Go now to the door to welcome him. This is some man worth while. (*To Manus.*) Let you get out of this.

Manus: No, whoever he is I'll stop and face him. Let him know we are players in the one game!

King: And what sort of a fool will you make of me, to have given in to take the like of you for a son-in-law? They will be putting ridicule on me in the songs.

Queen: If he must stop here we might put some face on him. . . . If I had but a decent suit. . . . Give me your cloak, Dall Glic. (*He gives it.*) Here now . . . (*To Manus.*) Put this around you. . . . (*Manus takes it awkwardly.*) It will cover up your kitchen suit.

Manus: Is it this way?

Queen: You have no right handling of it—stupid clown! This way!

Manus: (*Flinging it off.*) No, I'll change no more suits! It is time for me to stop fooling and give you what you did not ask yet, my name. I will tell out all the truth.

Gatekeeper: (*At door.*) The King of Sorcha! (*Taig comes in.*)

King and Queen: The King of Sorcha! (*They rush forward to greet him.*)

Nurse: (*To Manus.*) Did ever anyone hear the like!

Manus: It seems as if there will be a judgment between the man and the clothes!

Queen: (*To Taig.*) There is someone here that you know, King. This young man is giving out that he was your cook.

Taig: He was not. I never laid an eye on him till this minute.

Queen: I was sure he was nothing but a liar when he said he would tell the truth! Now, King, will you turn him out the door?

King: And what about the great dinner he has me promised?

Manus: Be easy King. Whether or no you keep your word to me I'll hold to mine! (*Blows whistle.*) In with the dishes! Take your places! Let the music play out!

(*Music plays, the strange men wheel in tables and dishes.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

ACT III

Scene: Same. Table cleared of all but vessels of fruit, cocoa-nuts, etc. Queen and Taig sitting in front, Nurse and Dall Glic standing in background.

Queen: Now, King, the dinner being at an end, and the music, we have time and quiet to be talking.

Taig: It is with the King's daughter I am come to talk.

Queen: Go, Dall Glic, call the Princess. She will be here on the minute, but it is best for you to tell me out if it is to ask her in marriage you are come.

Taig: It is so, where I was after being told she would be given as a wife to the first man that would come into the house.

Queen: And who in the world wide gave that out?

Taig: It was the Gateman said it to a

hawker bringing lobsters from the strand, and that got no leave to cross the threshold by reason of the oath given out by the King. The half of the kingdom she will get, they were telling me, and the king living, and the whole of it after he will be dead.

Nurse: There did another come in before you. Let me tell you that much!

Taig: There did not. The lobster man that set a watch upon the door.

Queen: A great honour you did us coming asking for her, and you being King of Sorcha!

Taig: Look at my ring and my crown. They will bear witness that I am. And my kind coat of cotton and my golden shirt! And under that again there's a stiff pocket. (*Slaps it.*) Is there e'er a looking-glass in any place? (*Gets up.*)

Dall Glic: There is the shining silver basin of the swans in the garden without.

Taig: That will do. I would wish to look tasty when I come looking for a lady of a wife. (*He and Dall Glic go outside window but in sight.*)

(*Princess comes in very proud and sad.*)

Queen: You should be proud this day, Nuala, and so grand a man coming asking you in marriage as the King of Sorcha.

Nurse: Grand, indeed! As grand as hands and pins can make him.

Princess: Are you not satisfied to have urged me to one man and promised me to another since sunrise?

Queen: What way could I know there was this match on the way, and a better match beyond measure? This is no black stranger going the road, but a man having a copper crown over his gateway and a silver crown over his palace door! I tell you he has means to hang a pearl of gold upon every rib of your hair! There is no one ahead of him in all Ireland, with his chain and his ring and his suit of the dearest silk!

Princess: If it was a suit I was to wed with he might do well enough.

Queen: Equal in blood to ourselves! Brought up to good behaviour and courage and mannerly ways.

Princess: In my opinion he is not.

Queen: You are talking foolishness. A King of Sorcha must be mannerly, seeing it is he himself sets the tune for manners.

Princess: He gave out a laugh when old Michelin slipped on the threshold. He kicked at the dog under the table that came looking for bones.

Queen: I tell you what might be ugly behaviour in a common man is suitable and right in a king. But you are so hard to please and so pettish, I am seven times tired of yourself and your ways.

Princess: If no one could force me to give in to the man that made a claim to me to-day, according to my father's bond, that bond is there yet to protect me from any other one.

Queen: Leave me alone! Myself and the Dall Glic will take means to rid you of that lad from the oven. I'll send in now to you the King of Sorcha. Let you show civility to him, and the wedding-day will be to-morrow.

Princess: I will not see him, I will have nothing to do with him; I tell you if he had the

rents of the whole world I would not go with him by day or by night, on foot or on horseback, in light or in darkness, in company or alone!

(*Queen has gone while she cries this out.*)

Nurse: The luck of the seven Saturdays on himself and on the Queen!

Princess: Oh, Muime, do not let him come near me! Have you no way to help me?

Nurse: It's myself that could help you if I was not under bonds not to speak!

Princess: What is it you know? Why won't you say one word?

Nurse: He put me under spells. . . . There now, my tongue turned with the word to be dumb.

Taig: (*At the window.*) Not a fear of me, Queen. It won't be long till I bring the Princess around.

Princess: I will not stay! Keep him here till I will hide myself out of sight! (*Goes.*)

Taig: (*Coming in.*) They told me the Princess was in it.

Nurse: She has good sense, she is in some other place.

Taig: (*Sitting down.*) Go call her to me.

Nurse: Who is it I will call her for?

Taig: For myself. You know who I am.

Nurse: My grief that I do not!

Taig: I am the King of Sorcha.

Nurse: If you say that lie again there will blisters rise up on your face.

Taig: Take care what you are saying, you hag!

Nurse: I know well what I am saying. I have good judgment between the noble and the mean blood of the world.

Taig: The Kings of Sorcha have high, noble blood.

Nurse: If they have, there is not so much of it in you as would redden a rib of scutch-grass.

Taig: You are crazed with folly and age.

Nurse: No, but I have my wits good enough. You ought to be as slippery as a living eel, I'll get satisfaction on you yet! I'll show out who you are!

Taig: Who am I so?

Nurse: That is what I have to get knowledge of, if I must ask it at the mouth of cold hell!

Taig: Do your best! I dare you!

Nurse: I will save my darling from you as sure as there's rocks on the strand! A girl that refused sons of the kings of the world!

Taig: And I will drag your darling from you as sure as there's foxes in Oughtmana!

Nurse: Oughtmana . . . Is that now your living place?

Taig: It is not. . . . I told you I came from the far-off kingdom of Sorcha. Look at my cloak that has on it the sign of the risen sun!

Nurse: Cloaks and suits and fringes. You have a great deal of talk of them. . . . Have you e'er a needle around you, or a shears?

Taig: (*His hand goes to breast of coat, but he withdraws it quickly.*) Here . . . no . . . What are you talking about? I know nothing at all of such things.

Nurse: In my opinion you do. Hearken

now. I know where is the real King of Sorcha!

Taig: Bring him before me now till I'll down him!

Nurse: Say that the time you will come face to face with him! Well, I'm under bonds to tell out nothing about him, but I have liberty to make known all I will find out about yourself.

Taig: Hurry on so. Little I care when once I'm wed with the King's daughter!

Nurse: That will never be!

Taig: The Queen is befriending me and in dread of losing me. I will threaten her if there is any delay I'll go look for another girl of a wife.

Nurse: I will make no delay. I'll have my story and my testimony before the white dawn of the morrow.

Taig: Do so and welcome! Before the yellow light of this evening I'll be the King's son-in-law! Bring your news, then, and little thanks you'll get for it! The King and Queen must keep up my name then for their own credit's sake. (*Makes a face at her as King*

comes in with Dall Glic, and servants with cushions. Nurse goes out, shaking her fist.) (*Rises.*) I was just asking to see you, King, to say there is a hurry on me. . . .

King: (*Sitting down on window seat while Servant arranges cushions about him.*) Keep your business a while. It's a poor thing to be going through business the very minute the dinner is ended.

Taig: I wouldn't but that it is pressing.

King: Go now to the Queen, in her parlour, and be chatting and whistling to the birds. I give you my word since I rose up from the table I am going here and there, up and down, craving and striving to find a place where I'll get leave to lay my head on the cushions for one little minute.

(*Taig goes reluctantly.*)

Dall Glic: (*Taking cushions from servants.*) Let you go now and leave the King to his rest.

(*They go out.*)

King: I don't know in the world why anyone would consent to be a king, and never to

be left to himself, but to be worried and wearied and interfered with from dark to daybreak and from morning to the fall of night.

Dall Glic: I will be going out now. I have but one word only to say . . .

King: Let it be a short word! I would be better pleased to hear the sound of breezes in the sycamores, and the humming of bees in the hive and the crooning and sleepy sounds of the sea!

Dall Glic: There is one thing only could cause me to annoy you.

King: It should be a queer big thing that wouldn't wait till I have my rest taken.

Dall Glic: So it is a big matter, and a weighty one.

King: Not to be left in quiet and all I am after using! Food that was easy to eat! Drink that was easy to drink! That's the dinner that *was* a dinner. That cook now is a wonder!

Dall Glic: That is now the very one I am wishful to speak about.

King: I give you my word, I'd sooner have

one goose dressed by him than seven dressed by any other one!

Dall Glic: The Queen that was urging me for to put my mind to make out some way to get quit of him.

King: Isn't it a hard thing the very minute I find a lad can dress a dinner to my liking, I must be made an attack on to get quit of him?

Dall Glic: It is on the head of the Princess Nu.

King: Tell me this, Dall Glic. Supposing, now, he was . . . in spite of me . . . to wed with her . . . against my will . . . and it might be unknownst to me.

Dall Glic: Such a thing must not happen.

King: To be sure, it must not happen. Why would it happen? But supposing—I only said supposing it did. Would you say would that lad grow too high in himself to go into the kitchen . . . it might be only an odd time . . . to oblige me . . . and dress a dinner the same as he did to-day?

Dall Glic: I am sure and certain that he would not. It is the way, it is, with the com-

mon sort, the lower orders. He'd be wishful to sit on a chair at his ease and to leave his hand idle till he'd grow to be bulky and wishful for sleep.

King: That is a pity, a great pity, and a great loss to the world. A big misfortune he to have got it in his head to take a liking to the girl. I tell you he was a great lad behind the saucepans!

Dall Glic: Since he did get it in his head, it is what we have to do now, to make an end of him.

King: To gaol him now, and settle up ovens and spits and all sorts in the cell, wouldn't he, to shorten the day, he apt to start cooking?

Dall Glic: In my belief he will do nothing at all, but to hold you to the promise you made, and to force you to send away the King of Sorcha.

King: To have the misfortune of a cook for a son-in-law, and without the good luck of profiting by what he can do in his trade! That is a hard thing for a father to put up with, let alone a king!

Dall Glic: If you will but listen to the advice I have to give . . .

King: I know it without you telling me. You are asking me to make away with the lad! And who knows but the girl might turn on me after, women are so queer, and say I had a right to have asked leave from herself?

Dall Glic: There will no one suspect you of doing it, and you to take my plan. Bid them heat the big oven outside on the lawn that is for roasting a bullock in its full bulk.

King: Don't be talking of roasted meat! I think I can eat no more for a twelvemonth!

Dall Glic: There will be nothing roasted that any person will have occasion to eat. When the oven door will be open, give orders to your bullies and your foot-soldiers to give a tip to him that will push him in. When evening comes, news will go out that he left the meat to burn and made off on his rambles, and no more about him.

King: What way can I send orders when I'm near crazed in my wits with the want of

rest. A little minute of sleep might soothe and settle my brain.

(*Lies down.*)

Dall Glic: The least little word to give leave . . . or a sign . . . such as to nod the head.

King: I give you my word, my head is tired nodding! Be off now and close the door after you and give out that anyone that comes to this side of the house at all in the next half-hour, his neck will be on the block before morning!

Dall Glic: (*Hurriedly.*) I'm going! I'm going.

(*Goes.*)

King: (*Locking door and drawing window curtains.*) That you may never come back till I ask you! (*Lies down and settles himself on pillows.*) I'll be lying here in my lone listening to the pigeons seeking their meal. "Coo-coo," they're saying, "Coo-coo."

(*Closes eyes.*)

Nurse: (*At door.*) Who is it locked the door? (*Shakes it.*) Who is it is in it? What is going on within? Is it that some bad work is after being done in this place? Hi! Hi! Hi!

King: (*Sitting up.*) Get away out of that, you torment of a nurse! Be off before I'll have the life of you!

Nurse: The Lord be praised, it is the King's own voice! There's time yet!

King: There's time, is there? There's time for everyone to give out their chat and their gab, and to do their business and take their ease and have a comfortable life, only the King! The beasts of the field have leave to lay themselves down in the meadow and to stretch their limbs on the green grass in the heat of the day, without being pestered and plagued and tormented and called to and wakened and worried, till a man is no less than wore out!

Nurse: Up or down, I'll say what I have to say, if it costs me my life. It is that I have to tell you of a plot that is made and a plan!

King: I won't listen! I heard enough of plots and plans within the last three minutes!

Nurse: You didn't hear this one. No one knows of it only myself.

King: I was told it by the Dall Glic.

Nurse: You were not! I am only after making it out on the moment!

King: A plot against the lad of the saucepans?

Nurse: That's it! That's it! Open now the door!

King: (*Putting a cushion over each ear and settling himself to sleep.*) Tell away and welcome!

(*Shuts eyes.*)

Nurse: That's right! You're listening. Give heed now. That schemer came a while ago letting on to be the King of Sorcha is no such thing! What do you say? . . . Maybe you knew it before? I wonder the Dall Glic not to have seen that for himself with his one eye. . . . Maybe you don't believe it? Well, I'll tell it out and prove it. I have got sure word by running messenger that came cross-cutting over the ridge of the hill. . . . That carrion that came in a coach, pressing to bring away the Princess before nightfall, giving himself out to be some great one, is no other than Taig the Tailor, that should be called

Taig the Twister, down from his mother's house from Oughtmana, that stole grand clothes which were left in the mother's charge, he being out at the time cutting cloth and shaping lies, and has himself dressed out in them the way you'd take him to be King! (*King has slumbered peacefully all through.*) Now, what do you say? Now, will you open the door?

Queen: (*Outside.*) What call have you to shouting and disturbing the King?

Nurse: I have good right and good reason to disturb him!

Queen: Go away and let me open the door.

Nurse: I will go and welcome now; I have told out my whole story to the King.

Queen: (*Shaking door.*) Open the door, my dear! It is I myself that is here! (*King looks up, listens, shakes his head and sinks back.*) Are you there at all, or what is it ails you?

Nurse: He is there, and is after conversing with myself.

Queen: (*Shaking again.*) Let me in, my

dear King! Open! Open! Open! unless that the falling sickness is come upon you, or that you are maybe lying dead upon the floor!

Nurse: Not a dead in the world.

Queen: Go, Nurse, I tell you, bring the smith from the anvil till he will break asunder the lock of the door!

(*King, annoyed, waddles to door and opens it suddenly. Queen stumbles in.*)

King: What at all has taken place that you come bawling and calling and disturbing my rest?

Queen: Oh! Are you sound and well? I was in dread there did something come upon you, when you gave no answer at all.

King: Am I bound to answer every call and clamour the same as a hall-porter at the door?

Queen: It is business that cannot wait. Here now is a request I have written to the bully of the King of Alban, bidding him to strike the head off whatever man will put the letter in his hand. Write your name and sign to it, in three royal words.

King: I wouldn't sign a letter out of my right hour if it was to make the rivers run gold. There is nothing comes of signing letters but more trouble in the end.

Queen: Give me, so, to bind it a drop of your own blood as a token and a seal. You will not refuse, and I telling you the messenger will go with it, and that will lose his head through it, is no less than that troublesome cook!

King: (*With a roar.*) Anyone to say that word again I will not leave a head on any neck in the kingdom! I declare on my oath it would be best for me to take the world for my pillow and put that lad upon the throne!

(*Queen goes back frightened to door.*)

Gateman: (*Coming in.*) There is a man coming in that will take no denial. It is Fintan the Astrologer.

(*Fintan enters with Dall Glic, Nurse, Princess, Taig, Manus and Prince of the Marshes crowding after him.*)

King: Another disturbance! The whole world would seem to be on the move!

Queen: Fintan! What brings him here again?

Fintan: A great deceit? A terrible deception!

King: What at all is it?

Fintan: Long and all as I'm in the world, such a thing never happened in my lifetime!

Queen: What is it has happened?

Fintan: It is not any fault of myself or any miscounting of my own! I am certain sure of that much. Is it that the stars of heaven are gone astray, they that are all one with a clock—unless it might be on a stormy night when they are wild-looking around the moon.

King: Go on with your story and stop your raving.

Fintan: The first time ever I came to this place I made a prophecy.

Dall Glic: You did, about the child was in the cradle.

Fintan: And that was but new in the world. It is what I said, that she was born under a certain star, and that in a score of years all but two, whatever acting was going on in that star

at the time she was born, she would get her crosses in the same way.

Dall Glic: The cross you foretold to her was to be ate by a Dragon. You laid down it would come upon a twelvemonth from this very day.

Fintan: That's it. That was according to my reckoning. There was no mistake in that. And I thought better of the Seven Stars than they to make a fool of me, after all the respect I had showed them, giving my life to watching themselves and the plans they have laid down for men and for mortals.

King: It seems as if I myself was the best prophet and that there is no Dragon at all.

Fintan: What a bad opinion you have of me that I would be so far out as that! It would be a deception and a disappointment out of measure, there to come no Dragon, and I after foretelling and prophesying him.

King: Troth, it would be no disappointment at all to ourselves.

Fintan: It would be better, I tell you, a score of king's daughters to be ate and devoured, than the high stars in their courses to be

proved wrong. But it must be right, it surely must be right. I gave the prophecy according to her birth hour, that was one hour before the falling back of the sun.

Dall Glic: It was not, but an hour before the rising of the sun.

Fintan: Not at all! It was the Nurse herself told me it was at evening she was born.

Queen: There is the Nurse now. Let you ask her account.

Fintan: (*To Nurse.*) It was yourself laid down it was evening!

Nurse: Sure I wasn't in the place at all till Samhuin time, when she was near three months in the world.

Fintan: Then it was some other hag the very spit of you! I wish she didn't tell a lie.

Nurse: Sure that one was banished out of this on the head of telling lies. An hour ere sunrise, and before the crowing of the cocks. The Dall Glic will tell you that much.

Dall Glic: That is so. I have it marked upon the genealogies in the chest.

Fintan: That is great news! It was a heavy

wrong was done me! It had me greatly upset. Twelve hours out in laying down the birth-time! That clears the character of myself and of the carwheel of the stars. I knew I could make no mistake in my office and in my billet!

King: Will you stop praising yourself and give out some sense?

Fintan: Knowledge is surely the greatest thing in the world! And truth! Twelve hours with the planets is equal to twelve months on earth. I am well satisfied now.

Queen: So the Dragon is not coming, and the girl is in no danger at all?

Fintan: Not coming! Heaven help your poor head! Didn't I get word within the last half-hour he is after leaving his den in the Kingdoms of the Cold, and is at this minute ploughing his way to Ireland, the same as I foretold him, but that I made a miscount of a year?

Nurse: (*Putting her arm round Princess.*) Och! do not listen or give heed to him at all!

Queen: When is he coming so?

Fintan: Amn't I tired telling you this day

Dall Glic: I'm in dread it should be the Dragon that has cleared the ocean at a leap!

King: (*Holding Princess.*) I will not give you up! Let him devour myself along with you!

Dall Glic: (*To Princess.*) It is best for me to put you in a hiding-hole under the ground, that has seven locked doors and seven locks on the farthest door. It might fail him to make you out.

Nurse: Oh, it would be hard for her to go where she cannot hear the voice of a friend or see the light of day!

Princess: Would you wish me to save myself and let all the district perish? You heard what Fintan said. It is not right for destruction to be put on a whole province, and the women and the children that I know.

Queen: There is maybe time yet for you to wed.

Princess: So long as I am living I have a choice. I will not be saved in that way. It is alone I will be in my death.

Manus: (*Coming to King.*) I am going out

from you, King. I might not be coming in to you again. I would wish to set you free from the promise you made me a while ago, and the bond.

King: What does it signify now? What does anything signify, and the world turning here and there!

Manus: And another thing. I would wish to ask pardon of the King's daughter. I ought not to have laid any claim to her, being a stranger in this place and without treasure or attendance. And yet . . . and yet . . . (*stoops and kisses hem of her dress*), she was dear to me. It is a man who never may look on her again is saying that.

(*Turns to door.*)

Taig: He is going to run from the Dragon! It is kind father for a scullion to be timid!

Queen: It is in his blood. He is maybe not to blame for what is according to his nature.

Manus: That is so. I am doing what is according to my nature.

(*Goes, Nurse goes after him.*)

Queen: (*To Dall Glic.*) Go throw a dish-

cloth after him that the little lads may be mocking him along the road!

Dall Glic: I will not. I have meddled enough at your bidding. I am done with living under dread. Let you blind me entirely! I am free of you. It might be best for me the two eyes to be withered, and I seeing nothing but the ever-living laws!

Prince of Marshes: (*Coming to Princess.*) It is my grief that with all the teachers I had there was not one to learn me the handling of weapons or of arms. But for all that I will not run away, but will strive to strike one blow in your defence against that wicked beast.

Princess: It is a good friend that would rid us of him. But it grieves me that you should go into such danger.

Prince of Marshes: (*To Dall Glic.*) Give me some sword or casting spears.

(*Dall Glic gives him spears.*)

Princess: I am sorry I made fun of you a while ago. I think you are a good kind man.

Prince of Marshes: (*Kissing her hand.*)

Having that word of praise I will bring a good heart into the fight.

(*Goes.*)

(*Taig is slipping out after him.*)

Queen: See now the King of Sorcha slipping away into the fight. Stop here now! (*Pulls him back.*) You have a life that is precious to many besides yourself. Do not go without being well armed—and with a troop of good fighting men at your back.

Taig: I am greatly obliged to you. I think I'll be best with myself.

Queen: You have no suit or armour upon you.

Taig: That is what I was thinking.

Queen: Here anyway is a sword.

Taig: (*Taking it.*) That's a nice belt now. Well worked, silver thread and gold.

Queen: The King's own guard will go out with you.

Taig: I wouldn't ask one of them! What would you think of me wanting help! A Dragon! Little I'd think of him. I'll knock the life out of him. I'll give him cruelty!

Queen: You have great courage indeed!

Taig: I'll cut him crossways and lengthways the same as a yard of frieze! I'll make garters of his body! I'll smooth him with a smoothing iron! Not a fear of me! I never lost a bet yet that I wasn't able to pay it!

Gateman: (*As he rushes in, Taig slips away.*) The Dragon! The Dragon! I seen it coming and its mouth open and a fiery flame from it! And nine miles of the sea is dry with all it drank of it! The whole country is gathering the same as of a fair day for to see him devour the Princess.

(*Princess trembles and sinks into a chair. King, Queen and Dall Glic look from window. They turn to her as they speak.*)

Queen: There is a terrible splashing in the sea! It is like as if the Dragon's tail had beaten it into suds of soap!

Dall Glic: He is near as big as a whale!

King: He is, and bigger!

Queen: I see him! I see him! He would seem to have seven heads!

Dall Glic: I see but one.

Queen: You would see more if you had your two eyes! He has six heads at the least!

King: He has but one. He is twisting and turning it around.

Dall Glic: He is coming up towards the flaggy shore!

King: I hear him! He is snoring like a flock of pigs!

Queen: He is rearing his head in the air! He has teeth as long as a tongs!

Dall Glic: No, but his tail he is rearing up! It would take a ladder forty feet long to get to the tip of it!

Queen: There is the King of Sorcha going out the gate for to make an end of him.

Dall Glic: So he is, too. That is great bravery.

King: He is going to one side. He is come to a stop.

Dall Glic: It seems to me he is ready to fall in his standing. He is gone into a little thicket of furze. He is not coming out, but is lying

crouched up in it the same as a hare in a tuft. I can see his shoulders narrowed up.

Queen: He maybe got a weakness.

King: He did, maybe, of courage. Shaking and shivering, he is like a hen in thunder. In my opinion, he is hiding from the fight.

Queen: There is the Prince of the Marshes going out now, and his coach after him! And his two aunts sitting in it and screeching to him not to run into danger!

King: He will not do much. He has not pith or power to handle arms. That sort brings a bad name on kings.

Dall Glic: He is gone away from the coach. He is facing to the flaggy shore!

Queen: Oh, the Dragon has put up his head and is spitting at him!

King: He has cast a spear into its jaw! Good man!

(*Princess goes over to window.*)

Dall Glic: He is casting another! His hand shook . . . it did not go straight. He is gone on again! He has cast another spear! It should hit the beast . . . it let a roar!

Princess: Good little Prince! What way is the battle now?

Dall Glic: It will kill him with its fiery breath! He is running now . . . he is stumbling . . . the Dragon is after him! He is up again! The two Aunts have pushed him into the coach and have closed the iron door.

King: It will fail the beast to swallow him coach and all. It is gone back to refresh itself in the sea. You can hear it puffing and plunging!

Queen: There is nothing to stop it now. (*To Princess.*) If you have e'er a prayer, now is the time to say it.

Dall Glic: Stop a minute . . . there is another champion going out.

King: A man wearing a saffron suit . . . who is he at all? He has the look of one used to giving orders.

Princess: (*Looking out.*) Oh! he is but going to his death. It would be better for me to throw myself into the tide and make an end of it.

(*Is rushing to door.*)

King: (*Holding her.*) He is drawing his sword. Himself and the Dragon are thrusting at one another on the flags!

Princess: Oh, close the curtains! Shut out the sound of the battle.

(*Dall Glic closes curtains.*)

King: Strike up now a tune of music that will deafen the sound!

(*Orchestra plays. Princess is kneeling by King. Music changes from discord to victory. Two Aunts and Gateman rush in. Noise of cheering heard without as the Gateman silences music.*)

Gateman: Great news and wonderful news and a great story!

First Aunt: The fight is ended!

Second Aunt: The Dragon is brought to his last goal!

Gateman: That young fighting man that has him flogged! Made at him like a wave breaking on the strand! They crashed at one another like two days of judgment! Like the battle of the cold with the heat!

First Aunt: You'd say he was going through dragons all his life!

Second Aunt: It can hardly put a stir out of itself!

Gateman: That champion has it baffled and mastered! It is after being chased over seven acres of ground!

First Aunt: Drove it to its knees on the flaggy shore and made an end of it!

King: God bless that man to-day and to-morrow!

Second Aunt: He has put it in a way it will eat no more kings' daughters!

Princess: And the stranger that mastered it—is he safe?

First Aunt: What signifies if he is or is not, so long as we have our own young prince to bring home!

Gatekeeper: He is not safe. No sooner had he the beast killed and conquered than he fell dead, and the life went out of him.

Princess: Oh, that is not right! He to be dead and I living after him!

King: He was surely noble and high-

blooded. There are some that will be sorry for his death.

Princess: And who should be more sorry than I myself am sorry? Who should keen him unless myself? There is a man that gave his life for me, and he young and all his days before him, and shut his eyes on the white world for my sake!

Queen: Indeed he was a man you might have been content to wed with, hard and all as you are to please.

Princess: I never will wed with any man so long as my life will last, that was bought for me with a life was more worthy by far than my own! He is gone out of my reach; let him wait for me to give him my thanks on the other side. Bring me now his sword and his shield till I will put them before me and cry my eyes down with grief!

Gateman: Here is his cap for you, anyway, and his cleaver and his bunch of skivers. For the champion you are crying was no other than that lad of a cook!

Queen: That is not true! It is not possible!

Gateman: Sure I seen him myself going out the gate a while ago. He put off his cook's apparel and threw it along with these behind the turfstack. I gathered them up presently and I coming in the door.

King: The world is gone beyond me entirely! But what I was saying all through, there was something beyond the common in that boy!

Queen: (*To Princess, who is clinging to chair.*) Let you be comforted now, knowing he cannot come back to lay claim to you in marriage, as it is likely he would, and he living.

Princess: It is he saved me after my unkindness! . . . . Oh, I am ashamed . . . . ashamed!

Queen: It is a queer thing a king's daughter to be crying after a man used to twisting the spit in place of weapons, and over skivers in the place of a sword!

Princess! (*Gropes and totters.*) What has happened? There is something gone astray! I have no respect for myself. . . . I cannot live! I am ashamed? Where is Nurse?

Muime! Come to me Muime! . . . My grief! The man that died for me, whether he is of the noble or the simple of the world, it is to him I have given the love of my soul!

(*Dall Glic supports her and lays her on window seat.*)

Nurse: (*Rushing in.*) What is it, honey? What at all are they after doing to you?

Queen: Throw over her a skillet of water. She is gone into a faint.

Dall Glic: (*Who is bending over her.*) She is in no faint. She is gone out.

Nurse: Oh, my child and my darling! What call had I to leave you among them at all?

King: Raise her up. It is impossible she can be gone.

Dall Glic: Gone out and spent, as sudden as a candle in a blast of wind.

King: Who would think grief would do away with her so sudden, there to be seven of the like of him dead?

Nurse: (*Rises.*) What did you do to her

at all, at all? Or was it through the fright and terror of the beast?

Queen: She died of the heartbreak, being told that the strange champion that had put down the Dragon was killed dead.

Nurse: Killed, is it? Who now put that lie out of his mouth? (*Shouts in her ear.*) What would ail him to be dead? It is myself can tell you the true story. No man in Ireland ever was half as good as him! It was himself mastered the beast and dragged the heart out of him and forced down a squirrel's heart in its place, and slapped a bridle on him. And he himself did but stagger and go to his knees in the heat and drunkenness of the battle, and rose up after as good as ever he was! It is out putting ointments on him that I was up to this, and healing up his cuts and wounds! Oh, what ails you, honey, that you will not waken?

Queen: She thought it to be a champion and a high up man that had died for her sake. It is what broke her down in the latter end, hearing him to be no big man at all, but a clown!

Nurse: Oh, my darling! And I not here to

tell you! You are a motherless child, and the curse of your mother will be on me! It was no clown fought for you, but a king, having generations of kings behind him, the young King of Sorcha, Manus, son of Solas son of Lugh.

King: I would believe that now sooner than many a thing I would hear.

Nurse: (*Keening.*) Oh, my child, and my share! I thought it was you would be closing my eyes, and now I am closing your own! You to be brought away in your young youth! Your hand that was whiter than the snow of one night, and the colour of the foxglove on your cheek.

(*A great shouting outside and burst of music. A march played. Manus comes in, followed by Fintan and Prince of the Marshes. Shouts and music continue. He leads the Dragon by a bridle. The others are in front of Princess, huddled from Dragon. Queen gets up on a chair.*)

Manus: Where is the Princess Nu? I have brought this beast to bow itself at her feet.

(*All are silent. Manus flings bridle to Fintan's hand. Dragon backs out. All go aside from Princess.*)

Nurse: She is here dead before you.

Manus: That cannot be! She was well and living half an hour ago.

Nurse: (*Rises.*) Oh, if she could but waken and hear your voice! She died with the fret of losing you, that is heaven's truth! It is tormented she was with these giving out you were done away with, and mocking at your weapons that they laid down to be the cleaver and the spit, till the heart broke in her like a nut.

Manus: (*Kneeling beside her.*) Then it is myself have brought the death darkness upon you at the very time I thought to have saved you!

Nurse: There is no blame upon you, but some that had too much talk!

(*Goes on keening.*)

Manus: What call had I to come humbugging and letting on as I did, teasing and tor-

menting her, and not coming as a King should that is come to ask for a Queen! Oh, come back for one minute only till I will ask your pardon!

Dall Glic: She cannot come to you or answer you at all for ever.

Manus: Then I myself will go follow you and will ask for your forgiveness wherever you are gone, on the Plain of Wonder or in the Many-Coloured Land! That is all I can do . . . . to go after you and tell you it was no want of respect that brought me in that dress, but hurry and folly and taking my own way. For it is what I have to say to you, that I gave you my heart's love, what I never gave to any other, since first I saw you before me in my sleep! Here, now, is a short road to reach you!

(*Takes sword.*)

Prince of Marshes: (*Catching his hand.*) Go easy now, go easy.

Manus: Take off your hand! I say I will die with her!

Prince of Marshes: That will not raise her up again. But I, now, if I have no skill in kill-

ing beasts or men, have maybe the means of bringing her back to life.

Nurse: Oh, my blessing on you! What is it you have at all?

Prince of Marshes: (*Taking bag from his Aunt.*) These three leaves from the Tree of Power that grows by the Well of Healing. Here they are now for you, tied with a thread of the wool of the sheep of the Land of Promise. There is power in them to bring one person only back to life.

First Aunt: Give them back to me! You have your own life to think of as well as any other one!

Second Aunt: Do not spend and squander that cure on any person but yourself!

Prince of Marshes: (*Giving the leaves.*) And if I have given her my love that it is likely I will give to no other woman for ever, indeed and indeed, I would not ask her or wish her to wed with a very frightened man, and that is what I was a while ago. But you yourself have earned her, being brave.

Manus: (*Taking leaves.*) I never will forget it to you. You will be a brave man yet.

Prince of Marshes: Give me in place of it your sword; for I am going my lone through the world for a twelvemonth and a day, till I will learn to fight with my own hand.

(*Manus gives him sword. He throws off cloak and outer coat and fastens it on.*)

Nurse: Stand back, now. Let the whole of ye stand back. (*She lays a leaf on the Princess's mouth and one on each of her hands.*) I call on you by the power of the Seven Belts of the Heavens, of the Twelve Winds of the World, of the Three Waters of the Sea!

(*Princess stirs slightly.*)

King: That is a wonder of wonders! She is stirring!

Manus: Oh, my share of the world! Are you come back to me?

Princess: It was a hard fight he wrestled with. . . . I thought I heard his voice. . . . Is he come from danger?

Nurse: He did. Here he is. He that saved

you and that killed the Dragon, and that let on to be a serving boy, and he no less than one of the world's kings!

Manus: Here I am, my dear, beside you, to be your comrade and your company for ever.

Princess: You! . . . Yes, it is yourself. Forgive me. I am sorry that I spoke unkindly to you a while ago; I am ashamed that it failed me to know you to be a king.

(*She stands up, helped by Nurse.*)

Manus: It was my own fault and my folly. What way could you know it? There is nothing to forgive.

Princess: But . . . if I did not recognise you as a king . . . anyway . . . the time you dropped the eggs . . . I was nearly certain that you were no cook!

(*They embrace.*)

Queen: There now I have everything brought about very well in the finish!

(*A scream at door. Taig rushes in, followed by Sibby, in country dress. He kneels at the Queen's feet, holding on to her skirt.*)

Sibby: Bad luck and bad cess to you! Torment and vexation on you! (*Seizes him by back of neck and shakes him.*) You dirty little scum and leavings! You puny shrimp you! You miserable ninth part of a man!

Queen: Is it King or the Dragon Killer he is letting on to be yet, or do you know what he is at all?

Sibby: It's myself knows that, and does know it! He being Taig the tailor, my own son and my misfortune, that stole away from me a while ago, bringing with him the grand clothes of that young champion (*points to Manus*) and his gold! To borrow a team of horses from the plough he did, and to bring away the magistrate's coach! But I followed him! I came tracking him on the road! Put off now those shoes that are too narrow for you, you red thief, you! For, believe me, you'll go facing home on shank's mare!

Taig: (*Whimpering.*) It's a very unkind thing you to go screeching that out before the King, that will maybe strike my head off!

Sibby: Did ever you know of anyone mak-

ing a quarrel in a whisper? To wed with the King's daughter, you would? To go vanquish the water-worm you would? I'll engage you ran before you went anear him!

Taig: If I didn't I'd be tore with his claws and scorched with his fiery breath. It is likely I'd be going home dead!

Sibby: Strip off now that cloak and that bodycoat and come along with me, or I'll make split marrow of you! What call have you to a suit that is worth more than the whole of the County Mayo? You're tricky and too much tricks in you, and you were born for tricks! It would be right you to be turned into the shape of a limping foxy cat!

Taig: (*Weeping as he takes off clothes.*) Sure I thought it no harm to try to go better myself.

Prince of Marshes: (*Giving his cloak and coat.*) Here, I bestow these to you. If you were a while ago a tailor among kings, from this out you will be a king among tailors.

Sibby: (*Curtseying.*) Well, then, my thousand blessings on you! He'll be as proud as

the world of that. Now, Taig, you'll be as dressed up as the best of them! Come on now to Oughtmana, as it is long till you'll quit it.

(*They go towards door.*)

Dragon: (*Putting his head in at window.*) Manus, King of Sorcha, I am starved with the want of food. Give me a bit to eat.

Fintan: He is not put down! He will devour the whole of us! I'd sooner face a bullet and ten guns!

Dragon: It is not mannerly to eat without being invited. Is it any harm to ask where will I find a meal will suit me?

Princess: Oh, does he ask to make a meal of me, after all?

Dragon: I am hungry and dancing with the hunger! It was you, Manus, stopped me from the one meal. Let you set before me another.

King: There is reason in that. Drive up now for him a bullock from the meadow.

Dragon: Manus, it is not bullocks I am craving, since the time you changed the heart within me for the heart of a little squirrel of the wood.

Manus: (*Taking a cocoa-nut from table.*) Here is a nut from the island of Lanka, that is called Adam's Paradise. Milk there is in it, and a kernel as white as snow.

(*He throws it out. Dragon is heard crunching.*)

Dragon: (*Putting head in again.*) More! Give me more of them! Give them out to me by the dozen and by the score!

Manus: You must go seek them in the east of the world, where you can gather them in bushels on the strand.

Dragon: So I will go there! I'll make no delay! I give you my word, I'd sooner one of them than to be cracking the skulls of kings' daughters, and the blood running down my jaws. Blood! Ugh! It would disgust me! I'm in dread it would cause vomiting. That and to have the plaits of hair tickling and tormenting my gullet!

Princess: (*Claps hands.*) That is good hearing, and a great change of heart.

Dragon: But if it's a tame dragon I am from this out, I'm thinking it's best for me to

make away before you know it, or it's likely ye'll be yoking me to harrow the clods, or to be dragging the water-car from the spring well. So good-bye the whole of ye, and get to your supper. Much good may it do you! I give you my word there is nothing in the universe I despise, only the flesh-eaters of Adam's race!

CURTAIN.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I wrote *The Dragon* in 1917, that now seems so many long years away, and I have been trying to remember how I came to write it. I think perhaps through some unseen inevitable kick of the swing towards gay-coloured comedy from the shadow of tragedy. It was begun seriously enough, for I see among my scraps of manuscripts that the earliest outline of it is entitled "The Awakening of a Soul," the soul of the little Princess who had not gone "far out in the world." And that idea was never quite lost, for even when it had all turned to comedy I see as an alternative name "A Change of Heart." For even the Dragon's heart is changed by force, as happens in the old folk tales and the heart of some innocent creature put in its place by the conqueror's hand; all change more or less except the Queen. She is yet satisfied that she has moved all things well, and so she must remain till some new breaking up or re-birth.

As to the framework, that was once to have been the often-told story of a King's daughter given to whatever man can "knock three laughs out of her." As well as I remember the first was to have been when the eggs were broken, and another when she laughed

with the joy of happy love. But the third was the stumbling-block. It was necessary the ears of the Abbey audience should be tickled at the same time as those of the Princess, and old-time jests like those of Sir Dinadin of the Round Table seem but dull to ears of to-day. So I called to my help the Dragon that has given his opportunity to so many a hero from Perseus in the Greek Stories to Shawneen in those of Kiltartan. And he did not sulk or fail me, for after one of the first performances the producer wrote: "I wish you had seen the play last night when a big Northern in the front of the stalls was overcome with helpless laughter, first by Sibby and then by the Dragon. He sat there long after the curtain fell, unable to move and wiping the tears from his eyes; the audiences stopped going out and stood and laughed at him." And even a Dragon may think it a feather in his cap to have made Ulster laugh.

A. G.

Coole,
February, 1920.

ORIGINAL CAST

"The Dragon" was first produced at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on 21st April, 1919, with the following cast:

The King	Barry Fitzgerald
The Queen	Mary Sheridan
The Princess Nula	Eithne Magee
The Dall Glic (The Blind Wise Man)	Peter Nolan
The Nurse	Maureen Delany
The Prince of the Marshes	J. Hugh Nagle
Manus—King of Sorcha	Arthur Shields
Fintan—The Astrologer	F. J. MacCormick
Taig	Florence Marks
The Dragon	Seaghan Barlow
The Porter	Stephen Casey
The Gatekeeper	Hubert M'Guire
Two Aunts of the Prince of the Marshes	Esme Ward Dymphna Daly

ARISTOTLE'S BELLOWS

PERSONS.

THE MOTHER.

CELIA . . . . *Her Daughter*

CONAN . . . . *Her Stepson*

TIMOTHY . . . . *Her Serving Man*

ROCK . . . . *A Neighbour*

FLANNERY . . . . *His Herd*

TWO CATS.

ACT I

ACT I

Scene: A Room in an old half-ruined castle.

Mother: Look out the door, Celia, and see is your uncle coming.

Celia: (*Who is lying on the ground, a bunch of ribbons in her hand, and playing with a pigeon, looks towards door without getting up*). I see no sign of him.

Mother: What time were you telling me it was a while ago?

Celia: It is not five minutes hardly since I was telling you it was ten o'clock by the sun.

Mother: So you did, if I could but have kept it in mind. What at all ails him that he does not come in to the breakfast?

Celia: He went out last night and the full moon shining. It is likely he passed the whole night abroad, drowsing or rummaging, whatever he does be looking for in the rath.

Mother: I'm in dread he'll go crazy with digging in it.

Celia: He was crazy with crossness before that.

Mother: If he is it's on account of his learning.

Them that have too much of it are seven times crosser than them that never saw a book.

Celia: It is better to be tied to any thorny bush than to be with a cross man. He to know the seventy-two languages he couldn't be more crabbed than what he is.

Mother: It is natural to people do be so clever to be fiery a little, and not have a long patience.

Celia: It's a pity he wouldn't stop in that school he had down in the North, and not to come back here in the latter end of life.

Mother: Ah, he was maybe tired with enlightening his scholars and he took a notion to acquaint ourselves with knowledge and learning. I was trying to reckon a while ago the number of the years he was away, according to the buttons of my gown (*fingers bodice*):—but they went astray on me at the gathers of the neck.

Celia: If the hour would come he'd go out of this, I'd sing, I'd play on all the melodeons that ever was known! (*Sings.*) (*Air*, "*Shule Aroon*.")

"I would not wish him any ill,
But were he swept to some far hill
It's then I'd laugh and laugh my fill,
Coo, Coo, my birdeen bán astore.

"I wish I was a linnet free
To rock and rustle on the tree
With none to haste or hustle me,
Coo, Coo, my birdeen bán astore!"

Mother: Did you make ready now what will please him for his breakfast?

Celia: (*Laughing.*) I'm doing every whole thing, but you know well to please him is not possible.

Mother: It is going astray on me what sort of egg best suits him, a pullet's egg or the egg of a duck.

Celia: I'd go search out if it would satisfy him the egg of an eagle having eyes as big as the moon, and feathers of pure gold.

Mother: Look out again would you see him.

Celia: (*Sitting up reluctantly.*) I wonder will the rosy ribbon or the pale put the best appearance on my party dress to-night? (*Looks out.*) He is coming down the path from the rath, and he having his little old book in his hand, that he gives out fell down before him from the skies.

Mother: So there is a little book, whatever language he does be wording out of it.

Celia: If you listen you'll hear it now, or hear his own talk, for he's mouthing and muttering as he travels the path.

Conan: (*Comes in: the book in his hand open, he is not looking at it.*) " Life is the flame of the heart . . . that heat is of the nature of the stars." . . . It is Aristotle had knowledge to turn that flame here and there. . . . What way now did he do that?

Mother: Ah, I'm well pleased to see you coming

in, Conan. I was getting uneasy thinking you were gone astray on us.

Conan: (*Dropping his book and picking it up again.*) I never knew the like of you, Maryanne, under the canopy of heaven. To be questioning me with your talk, and I striving to keep my mind upon all the wisdom of the ancient world. (*Sits down beside fire.*)

Mother: So you would be too. It is well able you are to do that.

Conan: (*To Celia.*) Have you e'er a meal to leave down to me?

Celia: It will be ready within three minutes of time.

Conan: Wasting the morning on me! What good are you if you cannot so much as boil the breakfast? Hurry on now.

Celia: Ah, hurry didn't save the hare. (*Sings ironically as she prepares breakfast.*) (*Air, "Mo Bhuachailin Buidhe."*)

"Come in the evening or come in the morning,
Come when you're looked for or come without warning;
Kisses and welcome you'll find here before you
And the oftner you come here the more I'll adore you."

Conan: Give me up the tea-pot.

Celia: Best leave it on the coals awhile.

Conan: Give me up those eggs so. (*Seizes them.*)

Celia: You can take the tea-pot too if you are calling for it. (*Goes on singing mischievously as she turns a cake.*)

"I'll pull you sweet flowers to wear if you'll choose
them,
Or after you've kissed them they'll lie on my
bosom."

Conan: (*Breaking eggs.*) These eggs— They're raw and running!

Celia: There's no one can say which is best, hurry or delay.

Conan: You had them boiled in cold water!

Celia: That's where you're wrong.

Conan: The young people that's in the world now, if you had book truth they wouldn't believe it. (*Flings eggs into the fire and pours out tea.*)

Mother: I hope now that is pleasing to you?

Conan: (*Threatening Celia with spoon.*) My seven curses on yourself and your fair-haired tea. (*Puts back tea-pot.*)

Celia: (*Laughing.*) It was hurry left it so weak on you!

Mother: Ah, don't be putting reproaches on him. Crossness is a thing born with us. It do run in the blood. Strive now to let him have a quiet life.

Conan: I am not asking a quiet life! But to come live with your own family, you might as well take your coffin on your back!

ACT I

~~While my spirit ranges through all the changes~~
~~Could turn the~~ world to felicity!
When Aristotle . . ."

Mother: It is like a dream to me I heard that name. Aristotle of the books.

Conan: (~~*Eagerly*~~.) What did you hear about him?

Mother: I don't know was it about him or was it some other one. My memory to be as good as it is bad I might maybe bring it to mind.

Conan: Hurry on now and remember!

Mother: Ah, it's hard remember anything and the weather so uncertain as what it is.

Conan: Is it of late you heard it?

Mother: It was maybe ere yesterday or some day of the sort; I don't know. Since the age tampered with me the thing I'd hear to-day I wouldn't think of to-morrow.

Conan: Try now and tell me was it that Aristotle, the time he walked Ireland, had come to this place.

Mother: It might be that, unless it might be some other thing.

Conan: And that he left some great treasure hid—it might be in the rath without.

Mother: And what good would it do you a pot of gold to be hid in the rath where you would never come near to it, it being guarded by enchanted cats and they having fiery eyes?

Conan: Did I say anything about a pot of gold? This was better again than gold. This was an enchantment would raise you up if you were gasping from death. Give attention now . . . Aristotle.

Mother: It's Harry he used to be called.

Conan: Listen now. (*Sings.*) (*Air, "Bells of Shandon."*)

"Once Aristotle hid in a bottle
Or some other vessel of security
A spell had power bring sweet from sour
Or bring blossoms blooming on the blasted tree."

Mother: (*Repeating last line.*) "Or bring blossoms blooming on the blasted tree."

Conan: Is that now what you heard . . . that Aristotle has hid some secret spell?

Mother: I won't say what I don't know. My memory is too weak for me to be telling lies.

Conan: You could strengthen it if you took it in hand, putting a knot in the corner of your shawl to keep such and such a thing in mind.

Mother: If I did I should put another knot in the other corner to remember what was the first one for.

Conan: You'd remember it well enough if it was a pound of tea!

Mother: Ah, maybe it's best be as I am and not to be running carrying lies here and there, putting trouble on people's mind.

Conan: Isn't it terrible to be seeing all this folly around me and not to have a way to better it!

Mother: Ah, dear, it's best leave the time under the mercy of the Man that is over us all.

Conan: (*~~Jumping up furious.~~*) Where's the use of old people being in the world at all if they cannot keep a memory of things gone by! (*~~Sings.~~*) (*Air,* "*~~O the time I've lost in wooing.~~*")

"O the time I've lost pursuing
And feeling nothing doing,
The lure that led me from my bed
Has left me sad and rueing!
Success seemed very near me!
High hope was there to cheer me!
I asked my book where would I look
And all it did was fleer me!"

Mother: What is it ails you?

Conan: That secret to be in the world, and I all to have laid my hand on it, and it to have gone astray on me!

Mother: So it would go too.

Conan: A secret that could change the world! I'd make it as good a world to live in as it was in the time of the Greeks. I don't see much goodness in the trace of the people in it now. To change everything to its contrary the way the book said it would! There would be great satisfaction doing that. Was there ever in the world a family was so little use to a man? (*~~Sings in dejection.~~*) (*Air,* "*My Molly O.*")

"There is a rose in Ireland, I thought it would be mine
But now that it is hid from me I must forever pine.
Till death shall come and comfort me for to the grave I'll go
And all for the sake of Aristotle's secret O!"

Celia: I wonder you wouldn't ask Timothy that is older again than what my mother is.

Conan: Timothy! He has the hearing lost.

Celia: Well there is no harm to try him.

Conan: (*Going to door.*) Timothy! . . . There, he's as deaf as a beetle.

Mother: It might be best for him. The thing the ear will not hear will not put trouble on the heart.

Celia: (*Who has gone out comes pushing him in.*) Here he is now for you.

Conan: Did ever you hear of Aristotle?

Timothy: Aye?

Conan: Aristotle!

Timothy: Ere a bottle? I might . . .

Conan: Aristotle. . . . That had some power?

Timothy: I never seen no flower.

Conan: Something he hid near this place.

Timothy: I never went near no race.

Conan: Has the whole world its mind made up to annoy me!

Celia: Raise your voice into his ear.
Conan: (*Chanting.*)

"Aristotle in the hour
He left Ireland left a power
In a gift Eolus gave
Could all Ireland change and save!"

Timothy: Would it now?
Conan: You said you had heard of a bottle.
Timothy: A charmed bottle. It is Biddy Early put a cure in it and bestowed it in her will to her son.
Conan: Aristotle that left one in the same way.
Timothy: It is what I am thinking that my old generations used to be talking about a bellows.
Conan: A bellows! There's no sense in that!
Timothy: Have it your own way so, and give me leave to go feeding the little chickens and the hens, for if I cannot hear what they say and they cannot understand what I say, they put no reproach on me after, no more than I would put it on themselves. (*Goes.*)
Celia: Let you be satisfied now and not torment yourself, for if you got the world wide you couldn't discover it. You might as well think to throw your hat to hit the stars.
Conan: You have me tormented among the whole of ye. To be without ye would be no harm at all. (*Sits down and weeps.*) Of all the families anyone would wish to live away from I am full sure my family is the worst.

Mother: Ah, dear, you're worn out and contrary with the want of sleep. Come now into the room and stretch yourself on the bed. To go sleeping out in the grass has no right rest in it at all! (*~~Takes his arm.~~*)

Conan: Where's the use of lying on my bed where it is convenient to the yard, that I'd be afflicted by the turkeys yelping and the pullets praising themselves after laying an egg! and the cackling and hissing of the geese.

Mother: Lie down so on the settle, and I'll let no one disturb you. You're destroyed, avic, with the want of sleep.

Conan: There'll be no peace in this kitchen no more than on the common highway with the people running in and out.

Mother: I'll go sit in the little gap without, and the whole place will be as quiet as St. Colman's wilderness of stones.

Conan: The boards are too hard.

Mother: I'll put a pillow in under you.

Conan: Now it's too narrow. Leave me now it'll be best.

Mother: Sleep and good dreams to you. (*Goes ~~singing sleepy song.~~*)

Conan: The most troublesome family ever I knew in all my born days! Why is that people cannot have behaviour now the same as in ancient Greece. (*~~Sits up.~~*) I'll not give them the satisfaction of going asleep. I'll drink a sup of the

tea that is black with standing and with strength. (*Drinks and lies down.*) I'll engage that'll keep me waking. (*Music heard.*) Is it to annoy me they are playing tunes of music? I'll let on to be asleep! (*Shuts eyes.*)

(*Two large Cats with fiery eyes look over top of settle.*)

1st Cat: See the fool that crossed our path
Rummaging within the rath.
Coveting a spell is bound
Agelong in our haunted ground.

Hid that none disturb its peace
By a Druid out from Greece.

Spies and robbers have no call
Rooting in our ancient wall.

Man or mortal what is he
Matched against the mighty Sidhe?

2nd Cat: Bid our riders of the night
Daze and craze him with affright,

Leave him fainting and forlorn
Hanging on the moon's young horn.

Let the death-bands turn him pale
Through the venom of our tail.

Let him learn to love our law
With the sharpness of our claw.

Let our King-cat's fiery flash
Turn him to a heap of ash.

1st Cat: Punishment enough he'll find
In his cross and cranky mind.

Ha, ha, ha, and ho, ho, ho,
He'd a sharper penance know,

We'd have better sport today
If he got his will and way,

Found the spell that lies unknown
Underneath his own hearthstone.

(*They disappear saying together:*)

Men and mortals what are ye
Matched against the mighty Sidhe?

Conan: (~~*Looking out timidly.*~~) Are they gone? Here, Puss, puss! Come hither now poor Puss! They're not in it. . . . Here now! here's milk for ye. And a drop of cream. . . . (~~*Gets up, peeps under settle and around.*~~) They are gone! And that they may never come back! I wouldn't wish to be brought riding a thorny bush in the night time into the cold that is behind the sun! What now did they say? Or is it dreaming I was? Oh, it was not! They spoke clear and plain. The hidden spell that I was seeking, they said it to be in the hiding hole under the hearth. (*Pokes, sneezes.*) Bad cess to Celia leaving that much

ashes to be choking me. Well, the luck has come to me at last!

(*Sings as he searches.*)

"Proudly the note of the trumpet is sounding,
Loudly the war cries rise on the gale;
Fleetly the steed by Lough Swilly is bounding
To join the thick squadrons in Saimear's green vale.
On every mountaineer, strangers to flight and fear;
Rush to the standard of dauntless Red Hugh
Bonnaught and gallowglass, throng from each mountain pass.
On for old Erin, O'Donnall Abu."

(*Pokes at hearthstone.*) Sure enough, it's loose! It's moving! Wait till I'll get a wedge under it!

(*Takes fork from table.*) It's coming!

(*Door suddenly opens and he drops fork and springs back.*)

Mother: (*Coming in with Rock and Flannery.*) Here now, come in the two of ye. Here now, Conan, is two of the neighbours, James Rock of Lis Crohan and Fardy Flannery the rambling herd, that are come to get a light for the pipe and they walking the road from the Fair.

Conan: That's the way you make a fool of me promising me peace and quiet for to sleep!

Mother: Ah, so I believe I did. But it slipped

away from me, and I listening to the blackbird on the bush.

Conan: (~~*To Rock.*~~) I wonder James Rock, that you wouldn't have on you so much as a half-penny box of matches!

Rock: (~~*Trying to get to hearth.*~~) So I have matches. But why would I spend one when I can get for nothing a light from a sod?

Flannery: Sure, I could give you a match I have this long time, waiting till I'll get as much tobacco as will fill a pipe.

Mother: It's the poor man does be generous. It's gone from my mind, Fardy, what was it brought you to be a servant of poverty?

Flannery: Since the day I lost on the road my forty pound that I had to stock my little farm of land, all has wore away from me and left me bare owning nothing unless daylight and the run of water. It was that put me on the Shaughrann.

(~~*Sings "The Bard of Armagh."*~~)

"Oh, list to the lay of a poor Irish harper,
And scorn not the strains of his old withered hand,
But remember the fingers could once move sharper
To raise the merry strains of his dear native land;
It was long before the shamrock our dear isle's loved emblem
Was crushed in its beauty 'neath the Saxon Lion's paw

I was called by the colleens of the village and valley
Bold Phelim Brady, the bard of Armagh."

Rock: Bad management! Look what I brought from the Fair through minding my own property—£20 for a milch cow, and thirty for a score of lambs!

Mother: £20 for a cow! Isn't that terrible money!

Conan: Let you whist now! You are putting a headache on me with all your little newses and country chat!

(*Mother goes, ~~the others are following~~.*)

Rock: (*~~Turning from door~~.*) It might be better for yourself, Conan Creevey, if you had minded business would bring profit to your hand in place of your foreign learning, that never put a penny piece in anyone's pocket that ever I heard. No earthly profit unless to addle the brain and leave the pocket empty.

Conan: You think yourself a great sort! Let me tell you that my learning has power to do more than that!

Rock: It's an empty mouth that has big talk.

Conan: What would you say hearing I had power put in my hand that could change the entire world? And that's what you never will have power to do.

Rock: What power is that?

Conan: Aristotle in the hour
He left Ireland left a power. . . .

Rock: Foolishness! I never would believe in poetry or in dreams or images, but in ready money down. (~~*Jingles bag.*~~)

Conan: I tell you you'll see me getting the victory over all Ireland!

Rock: You have but a cracked headpiece thinking that will come to you.

Conan: I tell you it will! No end at all in the world to what I am about to bring in!

Rock: It's easy praise yourself!

Conan: And so I am praising myself, and so will you all be praising me when you will see all that I will do!

Rock: It is what I think you got demented in the head and in the mind.

Conan: It is soon the wheel will be turned and the whole of the nation will be changed for the best. (~~*Sings.*~~)

"Dear Harp of my country, in darkness I found thee,
The cold chain of silence had hung o'er thee long,
When proudly, my own Irish Harp, I unbound thee,
And gave all thy chords to light, freedom and song,
The warm lay of love and the light note of gladness
Have waken'd thy fondest, thy liveliest thrill;

But so oft hast thou echo'd the deep sigh of sadness,
That ev'n in thy mirth it will steal from thee still."

Flannery: That's a great thought, if it is but a vanity or a dream.

Rock: (~~*Sneeringly.*~~) Well now and what would *you* do?

Flannery: I would wish a great lake of milk, the same as blessed St. Bridget, to be sharing with the family of Heaven. I would wish vessels full of alms that would save every sorrowful man. Do that now, Conan, and you'll have the world of prayers down on you!

Rock: It's what I'd do, to turn the whole of Galway Bay to dry land, and I to have it for myself, the red land, the green land, the fallow and the lea! The want of land is a great stoppage to a man having means to lay out in stock.

(~~*Sings.*~~) (*Air*, "~~*I wish I had the shepherd's lamb.*~~")

"I wish I had both mill and kiln,
I wish I had of land ~~my fill~~;
I wish I had ~~both~~ mill and kiln,
And all would follow after!"

Flannery: Ah, the land, the land, the rotten land, and what will you have in the end but the breadth of your back of it? Let you now soften

the heart in that one (*~~points to Rock~~*) till he would restore to me the thing he is aware of.

Conan: It was not for that the spell was promised, to be changing a few neighbours or a thing of the kind, or to be doing wonders in this broken little place. A town of dead factions! To change any of the dwellers in this place would be to make it better, for it would be impossible to make it worse. The time you wouldn't be meddling with them you wouldn't know them to be bad, but the time you'd have to do business with them that's the time you'd know it!

Rock: I suppose it is what you are asking to do, to make yourself rich?

Conan: I do not! I would be loth to take any profit, and Aristotle after laying down that *to* pleasure or *to* profit every wealthy man is a slave!

Flannery: What would you do, so?

Conan: I will change all into the similitude of ancient Greece! There is no man at all can understand argument but it is from Greece he is. I know well what I'm doing. I'm not like a potato having eyes this way and that. People were harmless long ago and why wouldn't they be made harmless again? Aristotle said, "Fair play is more beautiful than the morning and the evening star!"

"Be friendly with one another," he said, "and let the lawyers starve!" I'll turn the captains of soldiers to be as peaceable as children picking strawberries in the grass. I've a mind to change

the tongue of the people to the language of the Greeks, that no farmer will be grumbling over a halfpenny Independent, but be following the plough in full content, giving out Homer and the praises of the ancient world!

Flannery: If you make the farmers content you will make the world content.

Rock: You will, when you'll bring the sun from Greece to ripen our little lock of oats!

Conan: So I will drag Ireland from its moorings till I'll bring it to the middling sea that has no ebb or flood!

Rock: You will do well to put a change on the college that harboured you, and that left you so much of folly.

Conan: I'll do that! I'll be in College Green before the dawn is white—no but before the night is grey! It is to Dublin I will bring my spell, for I ever and always heard it said what Dublin will do to-day Ireland will do to-morrow! (*Sings.*)

"Let Erin remember the days of old
Ere her faithless sons betrayed her—
When Malachy wore the collar of gold
Which he won from her proud invader—
When her kings with standards of green unfurl'd,
Led the Red-Branch knights to danger;
Ere the emerald gem of the western world
Was set in the crown of a stranger."

Rock: And maybe you'll tell us now by what means you will do all this?

Conan: Go out of the house and I will tell you in the by and bye.

Rock: That is what I was thinking. You are talking nothing but lies.

Conan: I tell you that power is not far from where you stand! But I will let no one see it only myself.

Flannery: There might be some truth in it. There are some say enchantments never went out of Ireland.

Conan: It is a spell, I say, that will change anything to its contrary. To turn it upon a snail, there is hardly a greyhound but it would overtake; but a hare it would turn to be the slowest thing in the universe; too slow to go to a funeral.

Rock: I'll believe it when I'll see it.

Conan: You could see it if I let you look in this hiding-hole.

Rock: Good-morrow to you!

Conan: Then you will see it, for I'll raise up the stone. (*Kneels.*)

Rock: It to be anything it is likely a pot of sovereigns.

Flannery: It might be the harp of Angus.

Rock: I see no trace of it.

Conan: There is something hard! It should likely be a silver trumpet or a hunting-horn of gold!

Rock: Give me a hold of it.

Conan: Leave go! (*Lifts out bellows.*)

Rock: Ha! Ha! Ha! after all your chat, nothing but a little old bellows! . . .

Conan: There is seven rings on it. . . . They should signify the seven blasts. . . .

Rock: If there was seventy times seven what use would it be but to redden the coals?

Conan: Every one of these blasts has power to make some change.

Rock: Make one so, and I'll plough the world for you.

Conan: Is it that I would spend one of my seven blasts convincing the like of ye?

Rock: It is likely the case there is no power in it at all.

Conan: I'm very sure there is surely. The world will be a new world before to-morrow's Angelus bell.

Flannery: I never could believe in a bellows.

Rock: Here now is a fair offer. I'll loan you this bag of notes to pay your charges to Dublin if you will change that little pigeon in the crib into a crow.

Conan: I will do no such folly.

Rock: You wouldn't because you'd be afeared to try.

Conan: Hold it up to me. I'll show you am I afeared!

Rock: There it is now. (*Holds up cage.*)

Conan: Have a care! (*Blows.*)

Rock: (*Dropping it with a shriek.*) It has me

bit with its hard beak, it is turned to be an old black crow.

Flannery: As black as the bottom of the pot.

Crow: Caw! Caw! Caw!

(*Cats reappear and look over back of settle.*)

(*Music from behind.*) ("*O'Donnell Abu.*")

CURTAIN

ACT II

ACT II

Conan alone holding up bellows, singing:

Conan:

"And doth not a meeting like this make amends
For all the long years I've been wandering away
Deceived for a moment it's now in my hands—
I breathe the fresh air of life's morning again!"

Celia: (*Comes in having listened amused at door; claps hands.*) Very good! It is you yourself should be going to the dance house to-night in place of myself. It is long since I heard you rise so happy a tune!

Conan: (*Putting bellows behind him.*) What brings you here? Is there no work for you out in the garden—the cabbages to be cutting for the cow. . . .

Celia: I wouldn't wish to roughen my hands before evening. Music there will be for the dancing!

(*She lilts Miss McLeod's Reel.*)

Conan: Let you go ready yourself for it so.

Celia: Is it at this time of the day? You should be forgetting the hours of the clock the same as the poor mother.

Conan: It is a strange thing since I came to this house I never can get one minute's ease and quiet to myself.

Celia: It was hearing you singing brought me in.

Conan: I'd sooner have you without! Be going now.

Celia: I will and welcome. It is to bring out my little pigeon I will, where there is a few grains of barley fell from a car going the road.

Conan: Hurry on so!

Celia: (*Taking up cage.*) He is not in his crib. (*Looking here and there.*) Where now can he have gone?

Conan: He should have gone out the door.

Celia: He did not. He could not have come out unknown to me. Coo, coo,—coo—coo.

Conan: Never mind him now. You are putting my mind astray with your Coo, coo—

Celia: He might be in under the settle. (*Stoops.*) Where are you my little bird. (*Sings.*) (*Air, "Shule Aroon."*)

"But now my love has gone to France
His own fair fortune to advance;
If he come back again 'tis but a chance;
Os go dé tu Mavourneen slán!"

Conan: (*Pulling her away.*) What way would he be in it? Let you put a stop to that humming. (*Seizes her.*) Come here to the light . . . is it you sewed this button on my coat?

Celia: It was not. It is likely it was some tailor down in the North.

Conan: It is getting loose on the sleeve.

Celia: Ah, it will last a good while yet. Coo, coo!

Conan: (*Getting before her.*) It would be no great load on you to get a needle and put a stitch would tighten it.

Celia: I'll do it in the by and bye. There, I twisted the thread around it. That'll hold good enough for a while.

Conan: "Anything worth doing at all is worth doing well."

Celia: Aren't you getting very dainty in your dress?

Conan: Any man would like to have a decent appearance on his suit.

Celia: Isn't it the same to-day as it was yesterday?

Conan: Have you ne'er a needle?

Celia: I don't know where is it gone.

Conan: You haven't a stim of sense. Can't you keep in mind "Everything in its right place."

Celia: Sure, there's no hurry—the day is long.

Conan: Anything has to be done, the quickest to do it is the best.

Celia: I'm not working by the hour or the day.

Conan: Look now at Penelope of the Greeks, and all her riches, and her man not at hand to urge

her, how well she sat at the loom from morn till night till she'd have the makings of a suit of frieze.

Celia: Ah, that was in the ancient days, when you wouldn't buy it made and ready in the shops.

Conan: Will you so much as go to find a towel would take the dust off of the panes of glass?

Celia: I wonder at you craving to disturb the spider and it after making its web.

Conan: Well, go sit idle outside. I wouldn't wish to be looking at you! Aristotle that said a lazy body is all one with a lazy mind. You'll be begging your bread through the world's streets before your poll will be grey.

(*Sings:*)

"You'll dye your petticoat, you'll dye it red,
And through the world you'll beg your bread;
And you not hearkening to e'er a word I said,
It's then you'll know it to be true!"

Celia: (*Sings:*)

"Come here my little birdeen! Coo!"

Conan: (*Putting his hand on her mouth.*) Be going out now in place of calling that bird that is as lazy and as useless as yourself.

Celia: My little dove! Where are you at all!

Conan: A cat to have ate it would be no great loss!

Celia: Did you yourself do away with him?

Conan: I did not.

Celia: (~~*Wildly breaking free throws herself down.*~~) There is no place for him to be only in under the settle!

Conan: (~~*Dragging at her.*~~) It is not there.

Celia: (~~*Who has put in her hand.*~~) O what is that? It has hurt me!

Conan: A nail sticking up out of the floor.

Celia: (~~*Jumping up with a cry.*~~) It's a crow! A great big wicked black crow!

Conan: If it is let you leave it there.

Celia: (~~*Weeping.*~~) I'm certain sure it has my pigeon killed and ate!

Conan: To be so doleful after a pigeon! You haven't a stim of sense!

Celia: It was you gave it leave to do that!

Conan: Stop your whimpering and blubbering! What way can I settle the world and I being harassed and hampered with such a contrary class! I give you my word I have a mind to change myself into a ravenous beast will kill and devour ye all! That much would be no sin when it would be according to my nature. (~~*Sings or chants.*~~)

"On Clontarf he like a lion fell,
Thousands plunged in their own gore;
I to be such a lion now
I'd ask for nothing more!"

Celia: (~~*Sitting down miserable.*~~) You are a very wicked man!

Conan: Get up out of that or I'll make you!

Celia: I will not! I'm certain you did this cruel thing!

Conan: (*Taking up bellows.*) I'd hardly begrudge one of my six blasts to be quit of your slowness and your sluggish ways! Rise up now before I'll make you that you'll want shoes that will never wear out, you being ever on the trot and on the run from morning to the fall of night! Start up now! I'm on the bounds of doing it!

Celia: What are your raving about?

Conan: To get quit of you I cannot, but to change your nature I might! I give you warning . . . one, two, three!

(*Blows.*) (*Sings:* "~~*With a Chirrup.*~~") (~~*Air*~~, "*Garryowen.*")

"Let you rise and go light like a bird of the air
That goes high in its flight ever seeking its share;
Let you never go easy or pine for a rest
Till you'll be a world's wonder and work with the best!
With a chirrup, a chirrup, a ~~chirrup~~,
A chirrup, a chirrup, a chirrup,
A chirrup, a chirrup, a ~~chirrup~~, a chirrup,
A chirrup, a chirrup, a chirrup, a ~~chirrup~~!"

Celia: (~~*Staring and standing up.*~~) What is that? Is it the wind or is it a wisp of flame that is going athrough my bones!

(*Rock and Flannery come in.*)

(*Celia rushes out.*)

Rock: (~~*Out of breath.*~~) We went looking for a car to bring you to the train!

Flannery: There was not one to be found.

Rock: But those that are too costly!

Flannery: Till we went to the Doctor of the Union.

Rock: For to ask a lift for you on the ambulance. . . .

Flannery: But when he heard what we had to tell—

Rock: He said he would bring you and glad to do it on his own car, and no need to hansel him.

Flannery: And welcome, if it was as far as the grave!

Rock: All he is sorry for he hasn't a horse that would rise you up through the sky—

Conan: Let him give me the lift so—it will be a help to me. It wasn't only with his own hand Alexander won the world!

Flannery: Unless you might give him, he was saying, a blast of the bellows, that would change his dispensary into a racing stable, and all that come to be cured into jockeys and into grooms!

Conan: What chatterers ye are! I gave ye no leave to speak of that.

Rock: Ah, it costs nothing to be giving out newses.

Flannery: The world and all will be coming to the door to throw up their hats for you, and you

making your start, cars and ass cars, jennets and traps. (*Sings.*)

"O Bay of Dublin, how my heart your troublin',
Your beauty haunts me like a fever dream;
Like frozen fountains that the sun set bubblin'
My heart's blood warms when I but hear your name!"

Conan: It's my death I'll come to in Dublin. That news to get there ahead of me I'll be pressed in the throng as thin as a griddle.

Flannery: So you might be, too. All I have that might protect you I offer free, and that's this good umbrella that was given to me in a rainstorm by a priest. (*Holds it out.*)

Rock: And what do you say to me giving you the loan of your charges for the road?

Conan: Come in here, Maryanne! and give a glass to these honest men till they'll wish me good luck upon my journey, as it's much I'll need it, with the weight of all I have to do.

Mother: (*Coming in.*) So I will, so I will and welcome . . . but that I disremember where did I put the key of the chest.

Conan: I'll engage you do! There it is before you in the lock since ere yesterday. (*Mother puts bottle and glasses on table.*)

Flannery: (*Lifting glass.*) That you may bring great good to Ireland and to the world!

Rock: Here's your good health!

Conan: I'm obliged to you!

Rock and Flannery: (*Sing.*) (*Air*, "*The Cruiskeen lán.*")

"Gramachree ma cruiskeen Slainte geal mavourneen,
Gramachree a cool-in bawn, bawn, bawn, bán-bán-bán,
Oh, Gra-ma-chree a cool-in-bawn."

(*They nod as they finish and take out their pipes and sit down. A banging is heard.*)

Conan: What disturbance is that?

Celia comes in, her hair screwed up tight, skirt tucked up, is carrying a pail, brush, cloth, etc., lets them drop and proceeds to fasten up skirt.)

Mother: Ah, Celia, what is on you? I never saw you that way before.

Conan: Ha! Very good! I think that you will say there is a great change come upon her, and a right change.

Celia: Look now at the floor the way it is.

Mother: I see no other way but the way it is always.

Celia: There's a bit of soot after falling down the chimney. (*Picks up tongs.*)

Mother: Ah, leave it now, dear, a while.

Celia: Anything has to be done, the quickest way to do it is the best. (*Having taken up soot, flings down tongs.*)

Conan: Listen to that! Now am I able to work wonders?

Rock: It is that you have spent on her a blast?

Conan: If I did it was well spent.

Flannery: I'm in dread you have been robbing the poor.

Rock: It is myself you have robbed doing that. You have no call to be using those blasts for your own profit!

Conan: I have every right to bring order in my own dwelling before I can do any other thing!

Celia: All the dust of the world's roads is gathered in this kitchen. The whole place ate with filth and dirt.

(*Begins to sweep.*)

Conan: Ah, you needn't hardly go as far as that.

Celia: Anything that is worth doing is worth doing well. (*To Rock.*) Look now at the marks of your boots upon the ground. Get up out of that till I'll bustle it with the broom!

Rock: (*Getting up.*) There is a change indeed and a queer change. Where she used to be singing she is screeching the same as a slate where you'd be casting sums!

Celia: (*To Flannery.*) What's that I see in under your chair? Rise up. (*He gets up.*) It's a pin! (*Sticks it in her dress.*) Everything in its right place! (*Goes on flicking at the furniture.*)

Mother: Leave now knocking the furniture to flitters.

Celia: I will not, till I'll free it from the dust and dander of the year.

Mother: That'll do now. I see no dust.

Celia: You'll see it presently. (*Sweeps up a cloud.*)

Mother: Let you speak to her, Conan.

Conan: Leave now buzzing and banging about the room the same as a fly without a head!

Celia: Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day.

Conan: I tell you I have things to settle and to say before the car will come that is to bring me on my road to Dublin.

Celia: (*Stopping short.*) Is it that you are going to Dublin?

Conan: I am, and within the hour.

Celia: Pull off those boots from your feet!

Conan: I will not! Let you leave my boots alone!

Celia: You are not going out of the house with that slovenly appearance on you! To have it said out in Dublin that you are a class of man never has clean boots but of a Sunday!

Conan: They'll do well enough without you meddling!

Celia: Clean them yourself so! (*Gives him a rag and blacking and goes on dusting.*)

(*Sings.*) (*Air, "City of Sligo."*)

"We may tramp the earth
For all that we're worth,

But what odds where you and I go,
We never shall meet
A spot so sweet
As the beautiful city of Sligo."

Conan: What ailed me that I didn't leave her as she was before.

Celia: ~~(*Stopping work.*)~~ What way are they now?

Conan: (*Having cleaned his boots, putting them on hurriedly.*) They're very good. (*Wipes his brow, drawing hand across leaving mark of blacking.*)

Celia: The time I told you to put black on your shoes I didn't bid you rub it upon your brow!

Conan: I didn't put it in any wrong place.

Celia: I ask the whole of you, is it black his face is or white?

All: It is black indeed.

Celia: Would you put a reproach on the whole of the barony, going up among big citizens with a face on you the like of that?

Conan: I'll do well enough. There will be the black of the smoke from the engine on it any way, and I after journeying in the train.

Celia: You will not go be a disgrace to me.

Conan: If it is black it is yourself forced me to it.

Celia: If I did I'll make up for it, putting a clean face upon you now. (*Dips towel in pail and sings "With a fillip"—air, "Garryowen"—as she washes him.*)

"Bring to mind how the thrush gathers twigs for
his nest
And the honey bee toils without ever a rest
And the fishes swim ever to keep themselves clean,
And you'll praise me for making you fit to be seen!
With a fillip, a fillip, a fillip.
A fillip, a fillip, a fillip.
A fillip, a fillip, a fillip, a fillip,
A fillip, a fillip, a fillip, a fillip!"

Conan: Let me go, will you! Let you stop! The soap that is going into my eye!

Celia: My grief you are! Let you be willing to suffer, so long as you will be tasty and decent and be a credit to ourselves.

Conan: The suds are in my mouth!

Celia: One minute now and you'll be as clean as a bishop!

Conan: Let me go, can't you!

Celia: Only one thing wanting now.

Conan: I'm good enough, I tell you!

Celia: To cut the wisp from the back of your poll.

Conan: You will not cut it!

Celia: And you'll go into the grandeurs of Dublin and you being as neat as an egg.

Conan: (*With a roar.*) Leave meddling with my hair. I that can change the world with one turn of my hand!

Celia: Wait till I'll find the scissors! That's not the way to be going showing off in the

town, if you were all the saints and Druids of the universe!

Conan: (*Breaking free and rushing out.*) My seven thousand curses on the minute when I didn't leave you as you were. (*Goes.*)

Celia: (*Looking at Mother.*) There's meal on your dress, from the cake you're after putting in the oven—where now did that bellows fall from? (*Taking up bellows.*) It comes as handy as a gimlet. There (*blows the meal off*), that now will make a big difference in you.

Rock: (*Seizing bellows.*) Leave now that down out of your hand. Let you go looking for a scissors!

(*Celia goes off singing "The Beautiful City of Sligo."*)

Mother: (*Sitting down.*) I'm thinking it's seven years to-day, James Rock, since you took a lend of my clock.

Rock: You're raving! What call would I have to ask a lend of your clock?

Mother: The way you would rise in time for the fair of Feakle in the morning.

Rock: Did I now?

Mother: You did, and that's my truth. I was standing here, and you were standing there, and Celia that was but ten years was sucking the sugar off a spoon I was after putting in a bag that had come from the shop, for to put a grain into my tea.

Rock: (*Sneering.*) Well now, didn't your memory get very sharp!

Mother: You thought I had it forgot, but I remember it as clear as pictures. The time it stood at was seven minutes after four o'clock, and I never saw it from that day till now. This very day of the month it was, the year of the black sheep having twins.

Rock: It was but an old clock anyway.

Mother: If it was it is seven years older since I laid an eye on it. And it's kind father for you robbing me, where it's often you robbed your own mother, and you stealing away to go cardplaying the half crowns she had hid in the churn.

Rock: Didn't you get very wicked and hurtful, you that was a nice class of a woman without no harm!

Flannery: Ah, Ma'am, you that was easy-minded, it is not kind for you to be a scold.

Mother: And another thing, it was the same day where Michael Flannery (*turns to him*) came in an' told me of you being grown so covetous you had made away with your dog, by reason you begrudged it its diet.

Rock: (*To Flannery.*) You had a great deal to say about me!

Mother: And more than that again, he said you had it buried secretly, and had it personated, creeping around the haggard in the half dark and you barking, the way the neighbours would

think it to be living yet and as wicked as it was before.

Rock: (~~*To Flannery.*~~) I'll bring you into the Courts for telling lies!

Mother: (~~*Coming near Rock and speaking into his ear.*~~) And there's another thing I know, and that I made a promise to her that was your wife not to tell, but death has that promise broke.

Rock: Stop, can't you!

Mother: I know by sure witness that it was you found the forty pound *he* (~~*points to Flannery who nods*~~) lost on the road, and kept it for your own profit. Bring me now, I dare you, into the Courts!

Rock: (~~*Fearfully.*~~) That one would remember the world! It is as if she went to the grinding young!

(~~*Conan's voice heard. Singing: "Let me be merry" in a melancholy voice.*~~)

"If sadly thinking with spirits sinking
Could more than drinking my cares compose,
A cure for to-morrow from sighs I'd borrow,
And hope to-morrow would end my woes.
But as in wailing there's nought availing,
And Death unfailing will strike the blow,
Then for that reason and for a season,
Let us be merry before we go!"

Mother: It is Conan will near lose his wits with joy when he knows what is come back to me!

Conan: (~~*Peeping in.*~~) Is Celia gone?

Flannery: She is, Conan.

Conan: It's a queer thing with women. If you'll turn them from one road it's likely they'll go into another that is worse again.

Rock: That is so indeed. There is Celia's mother that is running telling lies, and leaving a heavy word upon a neighbour.

Mother: I'll give my promise not to tell it out in Court if he will give to poor Michael Flannery what is due to him, and that is the whole of what he has in his bag!

Conan: (*Laughing scornfully.*) Sure *she* has no memory at all. It fails her to remember that two and two makes four.

Mother: You think that? Well, listen now to me. Two and two is it? No, nine times two that is eighteen and nine times three twenty-seven, nine times four thirty-six, nine times five forty-five, nine times six fifty-four, nine times seven sixty-three, nine times eight seventy-two, nine times nine eighty-one. . . . Yes and eleven times, and any times that you will put before me!

Conan: That's enough, that's enough!

Mother: Ha, ha! You giving out that I can keep no knowledge in mind and no learning, when I should sit on the chapel roof to have enough of slates for all I can cast up of sums! Multiplication, Addition, Subtraction, and the rule of three!

Conan: Whist your tongue!

Mother: Is it the verses of Raftery's talk into the Bush you would wish me to give out, or the three hundred and sixty-nine verses of the Contention of the Bards—(*Repeats verse of "The Talk with the Bush" in Irish*):

"Céad agus míle roimh am na h-Airce
Tús agus crothugadh m'aois agus mo dhata
Thá me a shoin im' shuidhe san áit so
Agus is iomdha sgéal a bhféadain trácht air."

Or I'll English it if that will please you:

"A hundred years and a thousand before the time
of the Ark
Was the beginning and creation of my age and
my date;
I am from that time sitting in this place,
And it's many a story I am able to give news of."

Conan: (*Putting hands to ears and walking away.*) I am thinking your mind got unsettled with the weight of years.

Mother: (*Following him.*) No, but your own that got scattered from the time you ran barefoot carrying worms in a tin can for that Professor of a Collegian that went fishing in the stream, and that you followed after till you got to think yourself a lamp of light for the universe!

Conan: Will you stop deafening the whole world with your babble!

Mother: There was always a bad drop in you

that attached to you out of the grandfather. What did your languages do for you but to sharpen your tongue, till the scrape of it would take the skin off, the same as a cat! My blessing on you, Conan, but my curse upon your mouth!

Conan: Oh, will you stop your chat!

Mother: Every word you speak having in it the sting of a bee that was made out of the curses of a saint!

Conan: Stop your gibberish!

Mother: Are you satisfied now?

Conan: I'm not satisfied!

Mother: And never will be, for you were ever and always a fault-finder and full of crossness from the day that you were small suited.

Conan: You remember that, too?

Mother: I do well!

Conan: Where is the bellows? Was it you (*to Flannery*) that blew a blast on her?

Flannery: It was not.

Conan: Or you?

Rock: It's long sorry I'd be to do such a thing!

Conan: It is certain someone did it on her. Where now is it?

Mother: (~~*Seizing him.*~~) And I remember the day you threw out your mug of milk into the street, by reason, says you, you didn't like the colour of the cow that gave it!

Conan: Will you stop ripping up little annoyances, till I'll find the bellows!

Rock: It's what I'm thinking, her memory will soon be back at the far side of Solomon's Temple.

~~*Mother: (Repeats in Irish.)* Agus is iomdha sgéal a bhféadain trácht air!~~

Conan: (~~*Shouting.*~~) Is it that you'll drive the seven senses out of me!

Mother: Is it that you begrudge me my recollection? Ha! I have it in spite of you. (~~*Sings.*~~)

"Oft in the stilly night
Ere slumber's chain hath bound me
Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me.
The smiles, the tears, of childhood's years,
The words of love then spoken—
The eyes that shone, now dimmed and gone,
The cheerful hearts now broken.

Thus in the stilly night—ere slumber's chain
hath bound me
Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me!"

Celia: (*Bursting in.*) Where is Conan?

Conan: What do you want of me?

Celia: I have got the hair brush.

Conan: Let you not come near me!

Celia: And the comb!

Conan: Get away from me!

Celia: And the scissors.

Conan: Will you drive me out of the house or will I drive you out of it!

Celia: Ah, be easy!

Conan: I will not be easy!

Celia: (*Pushing him back in a chair.*) It will delight the world to see the way I'll send you out!

Conan: Is the universe gone distracted mad!

Celia: Be quiet now!

Conan: Leave your hold of me!

Celia: One stir, and the scissors will run into you!

(*Sings "With a snippet, a snippet, a snippet."*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

ACT III

The two Cats are looking over the settle.

Music behind scene: "O Johnny, I hardly knew you!"

1st Cat: We did well leaving the bellows for that foolish Human to see what he can do. There is great sport before us and behind.

2nd Cat: The best I ever saw since the Jesters went out from Tara.

1st Cat: They to be giving themselves high notions and to be looking down on Cats!

2nd Cat: Ha, Ha, Ha, the folly and the craziness of men! To see him changing them from one thing to the next, as if they wouldn't be a two-legged laughing stock whatever way they would change.

1st Cat: There's apt to be more changes yet till they will hardly know one another, or every other one, to be himself! (*Sings.*)

"Where are your eyes that looked so mild,
Hurroo! Hurroo!
Where are your eyes that looked so mild
When my poor heart you first beguiled,
Why did you run from me and the child?
O Johnny, I hardly knew you!

"With drums and guns and guns and drums,
The enemy nearly slew you!
My darling dear you look so queer,
O Johnny, I hardly knew you!

"Where are the legs with which you run,
When you went to carry a gun.
Indeed your dancing days are done,
O Johnny, I hardly knew you!"

(*Timothy and Mother come in from opposite doors. Cats disappear—music still heard faintly.*)

Mother: (*Looking at little bellows in her hand.*) Do you know *That* what it is, Timothy?

Timothy: Is it now a hand-bellows? It's long since I seen the like of that.

Mother: It is, but *what* bellows?

Timothy: Not a bellows? I'd nearly say it to be one.

Mother: There has strange things come to pass.

Timothy: That's what we've all been praying for this long time!

Mother: Ah, can't you give attention and strive to listen to me. It is all coming back to my mind. All the things I am remembering have my mind tattered and tossed.

Timothy: (*Who has been trying to hear the music, sings a verse.*)

"You haven't an arm and you haven't a leg,
Hurroo! Hurroo!

You're a yellow noseless chickenless egg,
You'll have to put up with a bowl to beg.
O Johnny, I hardly knew you! (*Music ceases.*)

Mother: Will you give attention, I say! It will be worth while for you to go chat with me now I can be telling you all that happened in my years gone by. What was it Conan was questioning me about a while ago? What was it now. . . .

"Aristotle in the hour
He left Ireland left a power!" . . .

Timothy: That now is a very nice sort of a little prayer.

Mother: (*Calling out.*) That's it! Aristotle's Bellows! I know now what has happened. This that is in my hand has in it the power to make changes. Changes! Didn't great changes come in the house to-day! (*Shouts.*) Did you see any great change in Celia?

Timothy: Why wouldn't I, and she at this minute fighting and barging at some poor travelling man, saying he laid a finger mark of bacon-grease upon the lintel of the door. Driving him off with a broken-toothed rake she is, she that was so gentle that she wouldn't hardly pluck the feathers of a dead duck!

Mother: It was surely a blast of this worked that change in her, as the blast she blew upon me worked a change in myself. O! all the thoughts

and memories that are thronging in my mind and in my head! Rushing up within me the same as chaff from the flail! Songs and stories and the newses I heard through the whole course of my lifetime! And I having no person to tell them out to! Do you hear me what I'm saying, Timothy? (~~*Shouts in his ear.*~~) What is come back to me is what I lost so long ago, my MEMORY.

Timothy: So it is a very good song.

(*Sings.*)

"By Memory inspired, and love of glory fired,
The deeds of men I love to dwell upon,
And the sympathetic glow of my spirit must bestow
On the memory of Mitchell that is gone, boys, gone—
The memory of Mitchell that is gone!"

Mother: Thoughts crowding on one another, mixing themselves up with one another for the want of sifting and settling! They'll have me distracted and I not able to speak them out to some person! Conan as surly as a bramble bush, and Celia wrapped up in her bucket and her broom! And yourself not able to hear one word I say. (*Sobs, and bellows falls from her hands.*)

Timothy: I'll lay it down now out of your way, ma'am, the way you can cry your fill whatever ails you.

Mother: (*Snatching it back.*) Stop! I'll not

part with it! I know now what I can do! Now! (*Points it at him.*) I'll make a companion to be listening to me through the long winter nights and the long summer days, and the world to be without any end at all, no more than the round of the full moon! You that have no hearing, this will bring back your hearing, the way you'll be a listener and a benefit to myself for ever. I wouldn't feel the weeks long that time!

(*Blows. Timothy turns away and gropes toward wall.*)

(*She sings: Air, "Eileen Aroon."*)

"What if the days go wrong,
When you can hear!
What if the evening's long,
You being near,
I'll tell my troubles out,
Put darkness to the rout
And to the roundabout!
Having your ear!"

(*Rock at door: sneezes. Mother drops bellows and goes. Timothy gives a cry, claps hands to ears and rushes out as if terrified.*)

Rock: (*Coming in seizes bellows.*) Well now, didn't this turn to be very lucky and very good! The very thing I came looking for to be left there under my hands! (*Puts it hurriedly under coat.*)

Flannery: (*Coming in.*) What are you doing here, James Rock?

Rock: What are you doing yourself?

Flannery: What is that in under your coat?

Rock: What's that to you?

Flannery: I'll know that when I see it.

Rock: What call have you to be questioning me?

Flannery: Open now your coat!

Rock: Stand out of my way!

Flannery: (*Suddenly tearing open coat and seizing bellows.*) Did you think it was unknownst to me you stole the bellows?

Rock: Ah, what steal?

Flannery: Put it back in the place it was!

Rock: I will within three minutes.

Flannery: You'll put it back here and now.

Rock: (*Coaxingly.*) Look at here now, Michael Flannery, we'll make a league between us. Did you ever see such folly as we're after seeing to-day? Sitting there for an hour and a half till that one settled the world upside down!

Flannery: If I did see folly, what I see now is treachery.

Rock: Didn't you take notice of the way that foolish old man is wasting and losing what was given him for to benefit mankind? A blast he has lost turning a pigeon to a crow, as if there wasn't enough in it before of that tribe picking the spuds out of the ridges. And another blast he has lost turning poor Celia, that was harmless, to be a holy terror of cleanness and a scold.

Flannery: Indeed, he'd as well have left her

as she was. There was something very pleasing in her little sleepy ways.

(*Sings.*)

"But sad it is to see you so
And to think of you now as an object of woe;
Your Peggy'll still keep an eye on her beau.
O Johnny, I hardly knew you!"

Rock: Bringing back to the memory of his mother every old grief and rancour. She that has a right to be making her peace with the grave!

Flannery: Indeed it seems he doesn't mind what he'll get so long as it's something that he wants.

Rock: Three blasts gone! And the world didn't begin to be cured.

Flannery: Sure enough he gave the bellows no fair play.

Rock: He has us made a fool of. He using it the way he did, he has us robbed.

Flannery: There's power in the four blasts left would bring peace and piety and prosperity and plenty to every one of the four provinces of Ireland.

Rock: That's it. There's no doubt but I'll make a better use of it than him, because I am a better man than himself.

Flannery: I don't know. You might not get so much respect in Dublin.

Rock: Dublin, where are you! What would

I'd do going to Dublin? Did you never hear said the skin to be nearer than the shirt?

Flannery: What do you mean saying that?

Rock: The first one I have to do good to is myself.

Flannery: Is it that you would grab the benefit of the bellows?

Rock: In troth I will. I've got a hold of it, and by cripes I'll knock a good turn out of it.

Flannery: To rob the country and the poor for your own profit? You are a class of man that is gathering all for himself.

Rock: It is not worth while we to fall out of friendship. I will use but the one blast.

Flannery: You have no right or call to meddle with it.

Rock: The first thing I will meddle with is my own rick of turf. And I'll give you leave to go do the same with your own umbrella, or whatever property you may own.

Flannery: Sooner than be covetous like yourself I'd live and and die in a ditch, and be buried from the Poorhouse!

Rock: Turf being black and light in the hand, and gold being shiny and weighty, there will be no delay in turning every sod into a solid brick of gold. I give you leave to do the same thing, and we'll be two rich men inside a half an hour!

Flannery: You are no less than a thief! (*Snatches at bellows.*)

Rock: Thief yourself. Leave your hand off it!

Flannery: Give it up here for the man that owns it!

Rock: You may set your coffin making for I'll beat you to the ground.

Flannery: (*As he clutches.*) Ah, you have given it a shove. It has blown a blast on yourself!

Rock: Yourself that blew it on me! Bad cess to you! But I'll do the same bad turn upon you! (*Blows.*)

Flannery: There is some footstep without. Heave it in under the ashes.

Rock: Whist your tongue! (*Flings bellows behind hearth.*)

(*Conan comes in.*)

Conan: With all the chattering of women I have the train near lost. The car is coming for me and I'll make no delay now but to set out.

(*Sings.*)

"Oh the French are on the sea,
Says the Sean Van Vocht,
Oh the French are on the sea,
Says the Sean Van Vocht,
Oh the French are in the bay,
They'll be here without delay,
And the Orange will decay,
Says the Sean Van Vocht!"

Here now is my little pack. You were saying, Thomas Flannery, you would be lending me the loan of your umbrella.

Flannery: Ah, what umbrella? There's no fear of rain.

Conan: (~~*Taking it.*~~) You to have proffered it I would not refuse it.

Flannery: (~~*Seizing it.*~~) I don't know. I have to mind my own property. It might not serve it to be loaning it to this one and that. It might leave the ribs of it bare.

Conan: That's the way with the whole of ye. I to give you my heart's blood you'd turn me upside down for a pint of porter!

Flannery: I see no sense or charity in lending to another anything that might be of profit to myself.

Conan: Let you keep it so! That your ribs may be as bare as its own ribs that are bursting out through the cloth!

Rock: Do not give heed to him, Conan. There is in this bag (~~*takes it out*~~) what will bring you every whole thing you might be wanting in the town. (~~*Takes out notes and gold and gives them.*~~)

Conan: It is only a small share I'll ask the lend of.

Rock: The lend of! No, but a free gift!

Conan: Well now, aren't you turned to be very kind? (~~*Takes notes.*~~)

Rock: Put that back in the bag. Here it is, the whole of it. Five and fifty pounds. Take it

and welcome! It is yourself will make a good use of it laying it out upon the needy and the poor. Changing all for their benefit and their good! Oh, since St. Bridget spread her cloak upon the Curragh this is the most day and the happiest day ever came to Ireland.

Conan: (*Giving bag to Flannery.*) Take it you, as is your due by what the mother said a while ago about the robbery he did on you in the time past.

Flannery: Give it here to me. I'll engage I'll keep a good grip on it from this out. It's long before any other one will get a one look at it!

Conan: There would seem to be a great change —and a sudden change come upon the two of ye. . . . (*With a roar.*) Where now is the bellows?

Flannery: (*Sulkily.*) What way would I know?

Conan: (*Shaking him.*) I know well what happened! It is *ye* have stolen two of my blasts! Putting changes on yourselves ye would—much good may it do ye— Thieving with your covetousness the last two nearly I had left!

Rock: (*Sulkily.*) Leave your hand off me! I never stole no blast!

Conan: There's a bad class going through the world. The most people you will give to will be the first to cry you down. This was a wrong out of measure! Thieves ye are and pickpockets! Ye that were not worth changing from one to another, no more than you'd change a pinch of dust

off the road into a puff of ashes. Stealing away my lovely blasts, bad luck to ye, the same as Prometheus stole the makings of a fire from the ancient gods!

Flannery: That is enough of keening and lamenting after a few blasts of barren wind—I'll be going where I have my own business to attend.

Conan: Where, so, is the bellows?

Flannery: How would I know?

Conan: The two of ye won't quit this till I'll find it! There is another two blasts in it that will bring sense and knowledge into Ireland yet!

Rock: Indeed they might bring comfort yet to many a sore heart!

Conan: (~~*Searching*~~.) Where now is it? I couldn't find it if the earth rose up and swallowed it. Where now did I lay it down?

Rock: There's too much changes in this place for me to know where anything is gone.

Conan: (~~*At door.*~~) Where are you Maryanne! Celia! Timothy! Let ye come hither and search out my little bellows!

(*Timothy comes in followed by Mother.*)

Conan: Hearken now, Timothy!

Timothy: (~~*Stopping his ears.*~~) Speak easy, speak easy!

Conan: Take down now your fingers from your ears the way you will hear my voice!

Timothy: Have a care now with your screeching would you split the drum of my ear?

Conan: Is it that you have got your hearing?

Timothy: My hearing is it? As good as that I can hear a lie, and it forming in the mind.

Conan: Is that the truth you're saying?

Timothy: Hear, is it! I can hear every whisper in this parish and the seven parishes are nearest. And the little midges roaring in the air.—Let ye whist now with your sneezing in the draught!

Conan: This is surely the work of the bellows. Another blast gone!

Rock: So it would be too. Mostly the whole of them gone and spent. It's hard know in the morning what way will it be with you at night.

(*Sings.*)

"I saw from the beach when the morning was shining
A bark o'er the waters move gloriously on—
I came when the sun o'er the beach was declining,
The bark was still there, but the waters were gone."

Timothy: It is yourself brought the misfortune on me, calling your Druid spells into the house.

Conan: It is not upon you I ever turned it.

Timothy: You have a great wrong done to me!

Mother: It is glad you should be and happy.

Timothy: Happy, is it? Give me a hareskin cap for to put over my ears, having wool in it very thick!

(*Sings.*)

"Silent, O Moyle, be the roar of thy water,
Break not ye breezes your chain of repose,
While murmuring mournfully Lir's lonely daughter
Tells to the night star her tale of woes.

When shall the swan, her death-note singing,
Sleep with wings in darkness furl'd?
When will heaven its sweet bells ringing
Call my spirit from this stormy world?"

Mother: Come with me now and I'll be chatting to you.

Timothy: Why would I be listening to your blather when I have the voices of the four winds to be listening to? The night wind, the east wind, the black wind and the wind from the south!

Conan: Such a thing I never saw before in all my natural life.

Timothy: To be hearing, without understanding it, the language of the tribes of the birds! (*Puts hands over ears again.*) There's too many sounds in the world! The sounds of the earth are terrible! The roots squeezing and jostling one another through the clefts, and the crashing of the acorn from the oak. The cry of the little birdeen in under the silence of the hawk!

Conan: (*To Mother.*) As it you let it loose upon him, let you bring him away to some hole or cave of the earth.

Timothy: It is my desire to go cast myself in the ocean where there'll be but one sound of its

waves, the fishes in its meadows being dumb! (*Goes to corner and hides his head in a sack.*)

Mother: Even so there might likely be a mermaid playing reels on her silver comb, and yourself craving after the world you left.

(*Sings: Air, "Spailpin Fánach."*)

"You think to go from every woe to peace in the wide ocean,
But you will find your foolish mind repent its foolish notion.
When dog-fish dash and mermaids splash their finny tails to find you,
I'll make a bet that you'll regret the world you left behind you!"

Celia. (*Clattering in with broom, etc.*) What are ye doing, coming in this room again after I having it settled so nice? I'll allow no one in the place again, only carriage company that will have no speck of dust upon the sole of their shoe!

Mother: Oh, Celia, there has strange things happened!

Celia: What I see strange is that some person has meddled with that hill of ashes on the hearth and set it flying athrough the air. Is it hens ye are wishful to be, that would be searching and scratching in the dust for grains? And this thrown down in the midst! (*Holds up bellows.*)

Conan: Give me my bellows!

Mother: No, but give it to me!

Rock and Flannery: Give it to myself!

Timothy: (*Looking up, with hands on ears.*) My curse upon it and its work. Little I care if it goes up with the clouds.

Celia: What in the world wide makes the whole of ye so eager to get hold of such a thing?

Conan: It has but the one blast left!

(*Sings.*)

"'Tis the last Rose of Summer
Left blooming alone,
All her lovely companions
Are faded and gone.
No flower of her kindred,
No rosebud is nigh,
To reflect back her blushes
Or give sigh for sigh!"

Celia: What are you fretting about blasts and about roses?

Rock: It has a charm on it—

Flannery: To change the world—

Mother: That changed myself—

Conan: For the worse—

Mother: And Timothy—

Conan: For the worse—

Rock: Myself and Flannery—

Conan: For the worse, for the worse—

Mother: Conan that changed yourself with it—

Conan: For the very worst!

Celia: (*To Conan.*) Is it riddles, or is it that you put a spell and a change upon me?

Conan: If I did, it was for your own good!

Celia: Do you call it for my good to set me running till I have my toes going through my shoes? (*Holds them out.*)

Conan: I didn't think to go that length.

Celia: To roughen my hands with soap and scalding water till they're near as knotted and as ugly as your own!

Conan: Ah, leave me alone! I tell you it is not by my own fault. My plan and my purpose that went astray and that broke down.

Celia: I will not leave you till you'll change me back to what I was. What way can these hands go to the dance house to-night? Change me back, I say!

Rock: And me—

Timothy: And myself, that I'll have quiet in my head again.

Conan: I cannot undo what has been done. There is no back way.

Timothy: Is there no way at all to come out of it safe and sane?

Conan: (*Shakes head.*) Let ye make the best of it.

Flannery: (*Sings.*) (*Air, "I saw from the Beach."*)

"Ne'er tell me of glories serenely adorning
The close of our day, the calm eve of our night.
Give me back, give me back the wild freshness of morning,
Her clouds and her tears are worth evening's best light."

Mother: (*Who has bellows in her hand.*) Stop! Stop—my mind is travelling backward . . . so

far I can hardly reach to it . . . but I'll come to it . . . the way I'll be changed to what I was before, and the town and the country wishing me well, I having got my enough of unfriendly looks and hard words!

Timothy: Hurry on Ma'am, and remember, and take the spell off the whole of us.

Mother: I am going back, back, to the longest thing that is in my mind and my memory! . . . I myself a child in my mother's arms the very day I was christened. . . .

Conan: Ah, stop your raving!

Mother: Songs and storytelling, and my old generations laying down news of this spell that is now come to pass. . . .

Rock: Did they tell what way to undo the charm?

Mother: You have but to turn the bellows the same as the smith would turn the anvil, or St. Patrick turned the stone for fine weather . . . and to blow a blast . . . and a twist will come inside in it and the charm will fall off with that blast, and undo the work that has been done!

All: Turn it so!

(*Cats look over, ~~playing on fiddles "O Johnny, I hardly knew you,~~" while mother blows on each.*)

Timothy: Ha! (*Takes hands from ears and puts one behind his ear.*)

Rock: Ha! Where now is my bag? (*Turns out his pockets, unhappy to find them empty.*)

Flannery: Ha! (*Smiles and holds out umbrella to Conan who takes it.*)

Mother to Celia. Let you blow a blast on me. (*Celia does so.*) Now it's much if I can remember to blow a blast backward upon yourself!

Celia: Stop a minute! Leave what is in me of life and of courage till I will blow the last blast is in the bellows upon Conan.

Conan: Stop that! Do you think to change and to crow over me. You will not or I'll lay my curse upon you, unless you would change me into an eagle would be turning his back upon the whole of ye, and facing to his perch upon the right hand of the master of the gods!

Celia: Is it to waste the last blast you would? Not at all. As we burned the candle we'll burn the inch! I'll not make two halves of it, I'll give it to you entirely!

Conan: You will not, you unlucky witch of illwill!

(*Protects himself with umbrella.*)

Celia: (*Having got him to a corner.*) Let you take things quiet and easy from this out, and be as content as you have been contrary from the very day and hour of your birth!

(*She blows upon him and he sits down smiling. Mother blows on Celia, and she sits down in first attitude.*)

Celia: (*Taking up pigeon.*) Oh, there you are come back my little dove and my darling!

(*Sings:* "*Shule Aroon.*")

"Come sit and settle on my knee
And I'll tell you and you'll tell me
A tale of what will never be,
Go dé-tóu-Mavourneen slan!"

Conan: (*Lighting pipe.*) So the dove is there, too. Aristotle said there is nothing at the end but what there used to be at the beginning. Well now, what a pleasant day we had together, and what good neighbours we all are, and what a comfortable family entirely.

Rock: You would seem to have done with your complaints about the universe, and your great plan to change it overthrown.

Conan: Not a complaint! What call have I to go complaining? The world is a very good world. the best nearly I ever knew.

(*Sings.*)

"O, a little cock sparrow he sat on a tree,
O, a little cock sparrow he sat on a tree,
O, a little cock sparrow he sat on a tree,
And he was as happy as happy could be,
With a chirrup, a chirrup, a chirrup!

"A chirrup, a chirrup, a chirrup!
A chirrup, a chirrup, a chirrup!
A chirrup, a chirrup, a chirrup!
A chirrup, a chirrup, a ——!"

CURTAIN

NOTE TO ARISTOTLE'S BELLOWS

I had begun to put down some notes for this play when in the autumn of 1919 I was suddenly obliged, (through the illness and death of the writer who had undertaken it), to take in hand the writing of the "Life and Achievement" of my nephew Hugh Lane, and this filled my mind and kept me hard at work for a year.

When the proofs were out of my hands I turned with but a vague recollection to these notes, and was surprised to find them fuller than they had appeared in my memory, so that the idea was rekindled and the writing was soon begun. And I found a certain rest and ease of mind in having turned from a long struggle, (in which, alas, I had been too often worsted) for exactitude in dates and names and in the setting down of facts, to the escape into a world of fantasy where I could create my own. And so before the winter was over the play was put in rehearsal at the Abbey Theatre, and its first performance was on St. Patrick's Day, 1921.

I have been looking at its first scenario, made according to my habit in rough pen and ink sketches, coloured with a pencil blue and red, and the changes from that early idea do not seem to have been very great, except that in the scene where Conan now

hears the secret of the hiding-place of the Spell from the talk of the cats, the Bellows had been at that time left beside him by a dwarf from the rath, in his sleep. The cats work better, and I owe their success to the genius of our Stage Carpenter, Mr. Sean Barlow, whose head of the Dragon from my play of that name had been such a masterpiece that I longed to see these other enchanted heads from his hand.

The name of the play in that first scenario was "The Fault-Finder" but my cranky Conan broke from that narrowness. If the play has a moral it is given in the words of the Mother, "It's best make changes little by little, the same as you'd put clothes upon a growing child." The restlessness of the time may have found its way into Conan's mind, or as some critic wrote, "He thinks of the Bellows as Mr. Wilson thought of the League of Nations," and so his disappointment comes. As A. E. writes in "The National Being," "I am sympathetic with idealists in a hurry, but I do not think the world can be changed suddenly by some heavenly alchemy, as St. Paul was smitten by a light from the overworld. Though the heart in us cries out continually, 'Oh, hurry, hurry to the Golden Age,' though we think of revolutions, we know that the patient marshalling of human forces is wisdom. . . . Not by revolutions can humanity be perfected. I might quote from an old oracle, 'The gods are never so turned away from man as when he ascends to them by disorderly methods.' Our spirits may live in the Golden Age but our bodily life moves on slow feet, and needs the lantern on the path and the staff struck carefully into the darkness before us to

see that the path beyond is not a morass, and the light not a will o' the wisp." (But this may not refer to our own Revolution, seeing that has been making a step now and again towards what many judged to be a will o' the wisp through over seven hundred years.)

As to the machinery of the play, the spell was first to have been worked by a harp hung up by some wandering magician, and that was to work its change according to the wind, as it blew from north or south, east or west. But that would have been troublesome in practice, and the Bellows having once entered my mind, brought there I think by some scribbling of the pencil that showed Conan protecting himself with an umbrella, seemed to have every necessary quality, economy, efficiency, convenience.

As to Aristotle, his name is a part of our folklore. The old wife of one of our labourers told me one day, as a bee buzzed through the open door: "Aristotle of the Books was very wise but the bees got the better of him in the end. He wanted to know how did they pack the comb, and he wasted the best part of a fortnight watching them, and he could not see them doing it. Then he made a hive with a glass cover on it and put it over them, and he thought to watch them. But when he went to put his eye to the glass, they had it all covered with wax so that it was as black as the pot, and he was as blind as before. He said he was never rightly killed till then. The bees had him beat that time surely." And Douglas Hyde brought home one day a story from Kilmacduagh bog, in which Aristotle took the place of Solomon, the Wise Man in our tales as well as in those of the East. And he said that as the

story grew and the teller became more familiar, the name of Aristotle was shortened to that of Harry.

As to the songs they are all sung to the old Irish airs I give at the end.

A. GREGORY.

August 18, 1921.

THE JESTER

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

FOR RICHARD

JANUARY, 1919

A. G.

PERSONS.

The Five Princes.
The Five Wrenboys.
The Guardian of the Princes and Governor of the Island.
The Servant.
The Two Dowager Messengers.
The Ogre.
The Jester.
Two Soldiers.

The Scene is laid in The Island of Hy Brasil, that appears every seven years.

Time: Out of mind.

ACT I

ACT I

Scene: A winter garden, with pots of flowering trees or fruit-trees. There are books about and some benches with cushions on them, and many cushions on the ground. The young PRINCES *are sitting or lying at their ease. One is playing "Home, Sweet Home" on a harp. The* SERVANT—*an old man—is standing in the background.*

1st Prince: Here, Gillie, will you please take off my shoe and see what there is in it that is pressing on my heel.

Servant: (*Taking it off and examining it.*) I see nothing.

1st Prince: Oh, yes, there is something; I have felt it all the morning. I have been thinking this long time of taking the shoe off, but I waited for you.

Servant: All I can find is a grain of poppy seed.

1st Prince: That is it of course—it was enough to hurt my skin.

2nd Prince: Gillie, there is a mayfly tickling my cheek. Will you please brush it away.

Servant: I will and welcome. (*Fans it off.*)

3rd Prince: Just give me, please, that book that is near my elbow. I cannot reach to it without taking my hand off my cheek.

Servant: I wouldn't wish you to do that. (*Gives him book.*)

4th Prince: Gillie, I think, I am nearly sure, there is a feather in this cushion that has the quill in it yet. I feel something hard.

Servant: Give it to me till I will open it and make a search.

4th Prince: No, wait a while till I am not lying on it. I will put up with the discomfort till then.

5th Prince. Would it give you too much trouble, Gillie, when you waken me in the morning, to come and call me three times, so that I can have the joy of dropping off again?

Servant: Why wouldn't I? And there is a thing I would wish to know. There will be a supper laid out here this evening for the Dowager Messengers that are coming to the Island, and I would wish to provide for yourselves whatever food would be pleasing to you.

1st Prince: It is too warm for eating. All I will ask is a few grapes from Spain.

2nd Prince: A mouthful of jelly in a silver spoon . . . or in the shape of a little castle with towers. When will the Lady Messengers be here?

Servant: Not before the fall of day.

2nd Prince: The time passes so quietly and

peaceably it does not feel like a year and a day since they came here before.

Servant: No wonder the time to pass easy and quiet where you are, with comfort all around you, and nothing to mark its course, and every season feeling the same as another, within the glass walls and the crystal roof of this place. And the old Queen, your godmother, sending her own Chamberlain to take charge of you, and to be your Guardian, and Governor of the Island. Sure, the wind itself must slacken coming to this sheltered place.

3rd Prince: That is a great thing. I would not wish the rough wind to be blowing upon me.

4th Prince. Or the dust to be rising and coming in among us to spoil our suits.

5th Prince: Or to be walking out on the hard roads, or climbing over stone walls, or tearing ourselves in hedges.

1st Prince: That is the reason we were sent here by the Queen, our Godmother, in place of being sent to any school. To be kept safe and secure.

2nd Prince: Not to be running here and there like our own poor five first cousins, that used to be slipping out and rambling in their young youth, till they were swallowed up by the sea.

3rd Prince: It was maybe by some big fish of the sea.

2nd Prince: It might be they were brought away by sea-robbers coming in a ship.

3rd Prince: Foolish they were and very foolish not to stay in peace and comfort in the house where they were safe.

Servant: There is no fear of *ye* stirring from where you are, having every whole thing ye can wish.

4th Prince: Here is the Guardian coming! (*They all rise.*)

Guardian: (*A very old man, much encumbered with wraps coming slowly in.*) Are you all here, all the five of you?

All: We are here!

Guardian: (*Standing, leaning on a stick, to address them.*) It's a pity that these being holidays, your teachers and tutors are far away,

Gone off afloat in a cedar boat to a College of Learning out in Cathay.

1st Prince: It's a pity indeed they're not here to-day.

Guardian: For it's likely you looked in your almanacs, or judged by the shape of the lessening moon,

That your Godmother's Dowager Messengers are due to arrive this afternoon.

2nd Prince: We did and we think they'll be here very soon.

Guardian: But I know they'll be glad that each royal lad, put under my rule in place of a school,

Can fashion his life without trouble or strife, and be shielded from care in a nice easy chair.

3rd Prince: As we always are and we always were.

Guardian: It is part of my knowledge that lads in a college, and made play one and all with a bat and a ball,

Come often to harm with a knock on the arm, and their hands get as hard as the hands of a clown.

4th Prince: But ours are as soft as thistledown.

Guardian: And I've seen young princes not far from your age, go chasing beasts on a winter day,

And carted home with a broken bone, and a yard of a doctor's bill to pay;

Or going to sail in the teeth of a gale, when the waves were rising mountains high,

Or fall from a height that was near out of sight, robbing rooks from their nest in a poplar tree.

5th Prince: (*To another.*) But that never happened to you or me.

Guardian: Or travelling far to a distant war, with battles and banners filling their mind,

And creeping back like a crumpled sack, content if they'd left no limbs behind.

1st Prince: But we'll have nothing to do with that, but stop at home with an easy mind.

Guardian: (*Sitting down.*) That's right. And now I would wish you to say over some of your tasks, to make ready for the Dowager Messengers, that they may bring back a good report to the Queen, your Godmother.

1st Prince: We'll do that. We would wish to be a credit to you, sir, and to our teachers.

Guardian: Say out now some little piece of Latin; that one that is my favourite.

1st Prince:

Aere sub gelido nullus rosa fundit odores,
Ut placeat tellus, sole calesce Dei.

Guardian: Say out the translation.

2nd Prince: Beneath a chilly blast the rose, loses its sweet, and scentless blows;

If you would have earth keep its charm, stop in the sunshine and keep warm.

Guardian: Very good. Now your history book; you were learning of late some genealogies of kings, might suit your Godmother.

3rd Prince:

William the First as the Conqueror known
At the Battle of Hastings ascended the throne,
His Acts were all made in the Norman tongue
And at eight every evening the curfew was rung
When each English subject by royal desire
Extinguished his candle and put out his fire.
He bridled the kingdom with forts round the Border
And the Tower of London was built by his order.

2nd Prince:

William called Rufus from having red hair,
Of virtues possessed but a moderate share,
But though he was one whom we covetous call,
He built the famed structure called Westminster Hall.

Walter Tyrrell his favourite, when hunting one
day,
Attempted a deer with an arrow to slay,
But missing his aim, shot the King to the heart
And the body was carried away in a cart.

Guardian: That will do. You have that very well in your memory. Now let me hear the grammar lesson.

3rd Prince:

A noun's the name of any thing
As school or garden, hoop or swing.

Guardian: Very good, go on.

4th Prince:

Adjectives tell the kind of noun
As strong or pretty, white or brown.

5th Prince:

Conjunctions join the nouns together
As men and children, wind or weather.

Guardian: It will be very useful to you to have that so well grafted in your mind. . . . What noise is that outside?

Servant: It is some strolling people.

1st Prince: Oh, Guardian, let them come in. We will do our work all the better if we have some amusement now.

Guardian: Maybe so. I am well pleased when amusements come to our door, that you can see without going outside the walls.

(*A Jester enters in very ragged green clothes and broken shoes.*)

But this is a very ragged looking man. Do you know anything about him, Gillie?

Servant: I seen him one time before. . . . At the time of the earthquake out in Foreign. A mad jester he was. A tramp class of a man. (*To Jester.*) Where is it you stop?

Jester: Where do I stop? Where would I be but everywhere, like the bad weather. I stop in no place, but going through the whole roads of the world.

Guardian: What brought you in here?

Jester: Hearing questions going on, and answers. I am well able to give help in that. It's not long since I was giving instruction to the sons of the King of Babylon. Here now is a question. How many ladders would it take to reach to the moon?

1st Prince: It should be a great many.

2nd Prince: I give it up.

Jester: One . . . if it is long enough! Which is it easier to spell, ducks or geese?

3rd Prince: Ducks I suppose because it's shorter.

Jester: Not at all but geese. Do you know why? Because it is spelled with *ees*. Tell me now, can you spell pup backwards?

4th Prince: P-u-p. . . .

Jester: Not at all.

4th Prince: But it is.

Jester: No, that is pup straight forwards. . . .

Can you run back and forwards at the same time?

4th Prince: Answer it yourself so.

Jester: You would be as wise as myself then. But I'll show you some tricks. Look at these three straws on my hand. Will I be able to blow two of them away, and the other to stay in its place?

5th Prince: They would all blow away.

Jester: Look now. Puff! (*He has put his finger on the middle one.*) Now is it possible?

5th Prince: It is easy when you know the way.

Jester: That is so with all knowledge. Can you wag one ear and keep the other quiet?

1st Prince: Nobody can do that.

Jester: (*Wagging one ear with his finger.*) There, now you see I have done it! There's more learning than is taught in books. Wait now and I'll give you out a song I'll engage you never heard. (*Sings or repeats.*)

It's I can rhyme you out the joy
That's ready for a lively boy.
Cuchulain flung a golden ball
And followed it where it would fall,
And when they counted him a child
He took the flying swans alive.
And Finn was given hares to mind
Till he outran them and the wind;
And he could swim and overtake
The wild duck swimming on the lake.
Osgar's young music was to thwack
The enemy and drive him back. . . .

Guardian: That's enough now. I have no fancy for that class of song. What other amusements are there?

Servant: There are the Wrenboys are come here at the end of their twelve days' funning.

Jester: That's it! The Wrenboys; a rambling troop; rambling the world like myself. I will make place for them. The old must give way to the young.

(*He goes and sits down in a corner, munching a crust and dozing.*)

Servant: Come in here let ye, and show what ye can do!

(*Wrenboys come in playing a fife. They are wearing little masks and are dressed in ragged tunics; they carry drum and fife, and stand in a line.*)

All Five Wrenboys: (*Together.*)

The wren, the wren, the King of all birds,
On Stephen's Day was caught in the furze.
Although he's small his family's great,
Rise up kind gentry and give us a treat!
(*Rub-a-tub-tub-tub, on the drum.*)

Down with the kettle and up with the pan
And give us money to bury the wren!
(*Rub-a-tub.*)

We followed him twenty miles since morn,
The Wrenboys are all tattered and torn
From Kyle-na-Gno we started late
And here we are at this grand gate!
(*Rub-a-tub.*)

He dipped his wing in a barrel of beer—
We wish you all a Happy New Year!
Give us now money to buy him a bier
And if you don't, we'll bury him here!
(*Rub-a-tub, and fife.*)

(*Princes laugh and clap hands.*)

1st Prince: That is very good.

2nd Prince: We must give them some money to bury the wren!

Guardian: Come on then and I will give you some. They will be glad of it. Play now the harp as you go.

(*Princes go off playing, "Home, Sweet Home." The Wrenboys sit down.*)

1st Wrenboy: It is likely we'll get good treatment.

Jester: (*Coming forward.*) Ye should be tired.

2nd Wrenboy: We should be, but that we have our feet well soled,—with the dust of the road!

3rd Wrenboy: If walking could tire us we might be tired. But we're as well pleased to be moving, where we have no house or home that you'll call a house or a home.

Jester: That's not so with those young princes. Wouldn't you be well pleased if ye could change places with them? (*He goes back to his corner.*)

4th Wrenboy: They are lovely kind young princes. I was near in dread they might set the dogs at us.

5th Wrenboy: They would do that if they

knew the Ogre had sent us to spy out the place for him.

1st Wrenboy: It failed us to see what he wanted us to see. It is likely he will beat us, when we go back, with his cat-o'-nine-tails.

2nd Wrenboy: Wouldn't it be good if we could do as that Jester was saying and change places with those sons of kings! They that can lie in the sunshine on soft pillows.

3rd Wrenboy: They that can use food when they ask it, and not have to wait till they can find it, or steal it, or get it what way they can.

3rd Wrenboy: And not to be waiting till you'll hear a rabbit squealing, with the teeth of a weasel in his neck.

4th Wrenboy: And the weasel when you take it to be spitting poison at you, the same as a serpent.

5th Wrenboy: It would be a nice thing to be eating sweet red apples in place of the green crabs.

1st Wrenboy: Or to be maybe sucking marrow-bones.

2nd Wrenboy: It is likely they are as airy and as careless as the blackbird singing on the bush.

3rd Wrenboy: It's likely they go following after foxes on horses, having huntsmen and beagles at their feet.

4th Wrenboy: Or go out sporting and fowling with their greyhound and with their gun.

5th Wrenboy: Or matching fighting cocks.

1st Wrenboy: It's likely they lead a gentleman's life, card-playing and eating and drinking, and racing with jockeys in speckled clothes.

2nd Wrenboy: Their brooches were shining like green fire, the same as a marten cat's eyes. They have everything finer than another.

3rd Wrenboy: Their faces as clean as a linen sheet. Their hair as if combed with a silver comb.

4th Wrenboy: There is no one to so much as put a clean shirt on ourselves.

5th Wrenboy: (*Rubbing his hand.*) I never felt uneasy at the dirt that is grinted into me till I saw them so nice.

1st Wrenboy: That music they were playing put me in mind of some far thing. It is dreamed to me, and it is never leaving my mind, that there is something I remember in the long ago . . . music in a house that was as bright as the moon, or as the brightest night of stars.

5th Wrenboy: Whisht! They are coming!

(*The Princes come back.*)

1st Prince: Here are coppers for you.

2nd Prince: And white money.

3rd Prince: And here is a piece of gold.

3rd Wrenboy: We are thankful to you! We'll bury the Wren in grand style now!

4th Prince: Have you far to go?

1st Wrenboy: Not very far if it was a straight road. But it is through the forest we go, beyond the lake.

2nd Wrenboy: We will hardly be there before the moon rises.

1st Prince: Are you afraid in the night time?

2nd Wrenboy: I am not. But I've seen a great deal of strange things at that time.

2nd Prince: What sort of things?

2nd Wrenboy: Fairies you'd see.

3rd Prince: Are there such things?

2nd Wrenboy: One night I was attending a pot-still, roasting oats for to make still-whiskey, and I seen hares coming out of the wood, by fours and by sixes, and they as thin as thin . . .

3rd Wrenboy: Hares are the biggest fairies of all.

4th Wrenboy: And down by the sea *I* met a weasel bringing up a fish in his mouth from the tide. And I often seen seals there, seals that are enchanted and look like humans, and will hold up a hand the same as a Christian.

5th Wrenboy: I that saw a hedgehog running up the side of a mountain as swift as a racehorse.

1st Wrenboy: It's the moonlight is the only time!

1st Prince: I never saw the moon but through a window.

1st Wrenboy: That's the time to go ramble. (*He chants.*)

You'll see the crane in the water standing,
And never landing a fish, for fright,
For he can but shiver seeing in the river
His shadow shaking in the bright moon light.

2nd Wrenboy:
Or you may listen to the plover's whistle,
When high above him the wild geese screech;
Or the mallard flying, as the night is dying,
His neck out-stretched towards the salt sea beach.
3rd Wrenboy:
When dawn discloses the oak and shows us
The wide sky whitening through the scanty ash,
High in the beeches the furry creatures,
Squirrel and marten lightly pass.
4th Wrenboy:
The badger scurries to find his burrow
The rabbit hurries to hide underground.
5th Wrenboy:
The pigeon rouses the thrush that drowses,
The woods awaken and the world goes round!

1st Wrenboy: Come now, it's time to be taking the road. Thank you, noble Gentlemen! That you may be doing the same thing this day fifty years!

(*They go off playing fife and beating drum.*)

1st Prince: I would nearly wish to be in their place to go through the world at large.

2nd Prince: They can go visit strange cities, sailing in white-sailed ships.

3rd Prince: They have no lessons to learn.

4th Prince: No hours to keep. No clocks to strike.

5th Prince: No Lady Messengers coming to show off to.

1st Prince: They should be as merry as midges.

2nd Prince: As free as the March wind.

3rd Prince: I don't know how we stopped so long shut up in this place.

4th Prince: I would be nearly ready to change places with them if such a thing were possible.

Jester: (*Who has had his back to them comes forward; the Princes stand on his right in a half circle.*) And why wouldn't you change?

5th Prince: It is a thing not possible.

Jester: I never could know the meaning of that word "impossible." Where there's a will there's a way.

1st Prince: It seems to me like the sound of a bell ringing a long way off, that I had leave at one time to go here and there.

Jester: If you are in earnest wanting to come to that freedom again you will get it.

2nd Prince: No, we would be followed and brought back through kindness.

Jester: If you have the strong wish to make the change you can make it.

1st Prince: I think I was never so much in earnest in all my life.

(*The Jester takes his pipe and plays a note on it. The Wrenboys come back beating their drum. They stand in a half circle on Jester's left.*)

Jester: (*To all.*)

If it's true ye wish to change,
Some to have a wider range,

Some to have an easy life,
Some to rove into the wild,
If you do it, do it fast,
Do it while you have the chance.

Wrenboys: (*Together.*) We will change! We will!

Jester: (*To Princes.*)

If you wish to leave your ease
And live wild and free like these
Like the fawn free and wild,
Not closed in as is a child,
Take your chance as it has come,
Let you run and run and run,
Where you'll get your joy and fun!

2nd Prince: They will know us, they will know us!

Jester: Change your clothes, change your clothes!

3rd Prince: They will know us every place.

Jester: Put their masks upon your face.
(*Wrenboys give them the masks.*)
You never will be missed
For I will throw a dust
Before every body's eye
That wants to look or pry
To see if you are here,—
And if you should appear
To be someway strange or queer
They will think themselves are blind
Or confused in the mind!
(*Throws a handful of dust over all the boys.*)

Dust of Mullein, work your spell;
Keep the double secret well!

5th Prince: (*To a Wrenboy.*)
Give me here your coat now fast
I don't want to be the last.
(*They all rapidly change coats and caps.*)

Jester: That will do, that is enough.

1st Wrenboy: But my hands are very rough.

Jester:
Never mind; never mind,
The truth is hard to find!

Guardian: (*Off stage.*) Gillie, do as you are told, shut the door, it's getting cold.

1st Prince: Oh, I'm in dread! What will be said!

2nd Prince: I'd sooner stay in my old way!

Jester:
Never mind, never mind!
The truth is hard to find!
Keep steady. Are you ready?

1st Wrenboy: I'll be ashamed if I am blamed.

2nd Wrenboy: I have no grace or lovely face!

Jester: (*To Princes.*) Too late, too late! Go out the gate!
(*The Princes have taken up fife and drum. They march out playing.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

ACT II

SCENE I

(*A front scene. A poor hut or tent, the Princes are coming in slowly, some limping. They are in Wrenboys' clothes and the masks are in their hands.*)

1st Prince: This should be the hut where the Wrenboys told us to come.

2nd Prince: It is a poor looking place.

3rd Prince: It is good to have any place to sit down in for a while. My back is aching.

4th Prince: My feet are all scratched and torn. There are blisters rising.

5th Prince: I thought we would never come to the end of the road. The stones by the lake were so hard and so sharp.

1st Prince: It was a root of a tree I fell over that made these bruises on my knees. I was watching a hawk that was still and quiet up in the air, and when it made a swoop all of a sudden I stumbled and fell.

2nd Prince: It was in slipping where the rocks are high I gave this twist to my arm. I can hardly move it.

3rd Prince: But wasn't the sight of the sunset splendid over the lake? And the hills so blue!

4th Prince: I like the tall trees best. I tried to climb up one of them, but it was so smooth I did but slip and fall.

1st Prince: I would wish to walk as far as the hills, and to have a view of the ocean that is beyond.

5th Prince: I am hungry. I wonder where we will get our supper.

4th Prince: Not in this place anyway, it must be making ready in some big guesthouse.

3rd Prince: What will they give us, I wonder?

2nd Prince: I wish we had in our hand what they have ready for us at home.

1st Prince: What use would it be to us? Do you remember what we asked to be given, some jellies and a few grapes? It is not that much would satisfy me now.

2nd Prince: Indeed it would not. I never felt so sharp a hunger in my longest memory.

3rd Prince: It is roasted meat I would wish for.

4th Prince: There were pigeons in the tall trees. They will maybe give us a pigeon pie.

5th Prince: I would be content with a plate of minced turkey with poached eggs.

1st Prince: I would sooner have a roasted chicken, with bread sauce.

2nd Prince: Be quiet. . . . I think I hear someone coming! (*Looks out.*)

3rd Prince: (*Looking out.*) I see him. He is not a right man . . . he is very strange looking. . . .

4th Prince: (*Looking out.*) Oh! It is an Ogre! A Grugach!

(*All shrink back and hurriedly put on masks.*)

Ogre: (*Coming in: he wears a frightful mask, has red hair and a cloak of rough skins and carries a whip with many lashes.*) What makes ye late tonight, ye young schemers? What was it delayed ye? Lagging along the road.

1st Prince: We came as fast as we could. It was getting dusk in the wood.

Ogre: Dusk, good morrow to you! I'll dusk ye! I had a mind to go after ye and to change myself into the form of a wolf, and catch a hold of ye with my long sharp teeth!

2nd Prince: We did not know there was any great hurry.

Ogre: There is always hurry when you are on my messages. What did I bring you away from your own house for and put ye on the shaughraun for and keep ye wandering, if it was not to be serviceable and helpful to myself. Show me now what ye have in your pocket or your bag.

3rd Prince: This is all we got in the bag. (*Holds it out.*) It is but very little.

Ogre: (*Turning it out and counting it.*) Coppers! Silver! What is this? A piece of gold! Is that what ye call little? What notions ye have!

Take care did ye keep any of it back! If ye did I'll skin ye with the lash of my cat-o'-nine-tails. (*Shakes it.*)

4th Prince: That is all we got. It should maybe pay for our supper in some place.

Ogre: What supper? To go buy supper with my money! It will go to add to my store of treasure in the cave that is under ground.

5th Prince: We are hungry, very hungry. When will the supper be ready?

Ogre: It will be ready whenever ye will ready it for yourselves. Ye should know that by this time.

1st Prince: We would make it ready if we were acquainted with the way.

Ogre: It is gone cracked ye are? What is it ye are thinking to get for your supper? What ailed ye that ye didn't climb a tree and suck a few pigeon's eggs?

2nd Prince: We were thinking of a pigeon pie.

Ogre: A what! ! !

2nd Prince: A pigeon pie.

Ogre: Hurry on then making your pigeon pie! There are pigeons enough there in the corner, that a hawk that is my carrier brought me in a while ago. And there's a pike that was in the lake these hundred years, an otter is after leaving at my door.

3rd Prince: (*Taking a pigeon.*) I don't think this is a right pigeon.

4th Prince: Pigeons in a pie are not the pigeons that have feathers.

5th Prince: (*To Ogre.*) Please, sir, where can we find pigeons without feathers, that are trussed on a silver skewer?

Ogre: Aye? What's that?

1st Prince: Never mind. You'll anger him. Maybe we can pull the feathers off these. I have read of plucking a pigeon in our books. (*They begin to pluck.*)

2nd Prince: It is very hard work.

3rd Prince: I never knew feathers could stick in so hard.

4th Prince: The more we pull out the more there would seem to be left.

5th Prince: It will be a feather pie we will be getting in the end.

1st Prince: (*Throwing it down.*) It is no use. We might work at it to-day and to-morrow and be no nearer to a finish.

2nd Prince: The pike might be better.

3rd Prince: It has no feathers anyway.

4th Prince: (*Touching it.*) It is raw and bleeding!

5th Prince: We might roast it.

1st Prince: The fire is black out.

2nd Prince: I wonder what way can we kindle it?

3rd Prince: Better ask him. (*Points to Ogre.*)

2nd Prince: Please, sir, what way can we kindle the fire?

Ogre: What!

4th Prince: We would wish to light the fire.

Ogre: Well, do so.

5th Prince: If we had a box of matches. . . .

Ogre: Matches! What are you talking about? Matches won't be invented for the next seven hundred years.

1st Prince: What can we do then, we are starving with hunger.

Ogre: Let ye blow a breath upon a coal under the ashes, and bring in small sticks from the wood.

2nd Prince: (*Blowing.*) The ashes are choking me.

Ogre: Very good. Then you'll put no delay on me, waiting till you'll cook your supper.

3rd Prince: Where can we get it then?

Ogre: You'll go without it, as you were too helpless to catch it, or to dress it, there's no one will force you to eat it.

4th Prince: If there is nothing for us to eat we had best pass the time in sleep.

5th Prince: I am all covered with ashes and dirt. (*To Ogre.*) Please, where can I find a towel and a piece of soap?

Ogre: Soap! Is it bewitched ye are or demented in the head? Did ever anyone hear of soap unless of a Saturday night? Letting on to be

as dainty and as useless as those young princes beyond, that are kept closed up in a tower of glass. Come on now. If there is no food that suits you, leave it. It is time for us to get to work.

1st Prince: But it is bed-time.

Ogre: Your bed-time is the time when I have no more use for you. Don't you know I have made a plan? What was it I sent you for, spying out that place of the young princes? Wasn't it to see where is it that treasure is kept, the golden-handled sword of Justice that is used by the Guardian when he turns Judge.

2nd Prince: That is kept in the Courthouse.

Ogre: That's right . . . in what part of it?

3rd Prince: What do you want it for?

Ogre: I have it in my mind this long time to get and to keep it in my cave under ground, along with the rest of my treasures that are in charge of my two enchanted cats. I have had near enough of grubbing for gold with a pick in the clefts and crannies of the earth. It is time for me to find some rest, and get into my hand what is ready worked and smelted and purified. We are going to that Courthouse to-night. If we cannot get in at the door, I will put ye in at the window and ye can open the door to myself. I will find out where the sword is, and away with us, and it in my hand.

4th Prince: But that would be stealing.

Ogre: What else would it be?

4th Prince: But that is wrong. It is against the law.

Ogre: The law! That is the Judge's trade. Breaking it is mine.

5th Prince: Ask him for it and maybe he will give it to you, he is so kind.

Ogre: I'll take no charity! What I get I'll earn by taking it. I would feel no pleasure it being given to me, any more than a huntsman would take pleasure being made a present of a dead fox, in place of getting a run across country after it. Come on now! We'll have the moon wasted. We'll hardly get there before the dawn of day.

1st Prince: Whatever time you get there the Guardian will be awake. There is a cock of Denmark perched on the curtain rod of his bed, specially to waken him if there is any stir.

Ogre: There is, is there? What a fool you think me to be. Do you see that pot?

2nd Prince: We do see it.

Ogre: Look what there is in it.

3rd Prince: Nothing but a few bare bones.

Ogre: Well, that is all that is left of the Judge's cock of Denmark, that was brought to me awhile ago by a fox that is my messenger, and that I have boiled and ate and devoured.

All the Princes: O! O! O!

Ogre: (*Cracking his whip.*) He was boiled in the little pot. Come on now and lead the way, or

I give you my word it is in the big pot your own bones will be making broth for my breakfast in the morning! (*Cracks whip.*) Now. right about face! Quick march!

CURTAIN

SCENE II

(*The Winter Garden, evening.* ***The Servant settling*** *benches and a table.*)

Guardian: (*Coming in.*) Are the Dowager Messengers come? They are late.

Servant: They are come. They are at the looking-glasses settling themselves.

Guardian: As soon as they are ready you will call in the Princes for their examination before them, and their tasks.

Servant: I will.

Guardian: The Messengers will have a good report to bring back of them. They have come to be good scholars, in poetry, in music, in languages, in history, in numbers and all sorts. The old Queen-Godmother will be well satisfied with their report.

Servant: She might and she might not.

Guardian: They would be hard to please if they are not well pleased with the lads, as to learning and as to manners and behaviour.

Servant: Maybe so. Maybe so. There are strange things in the world.

Guardian: You're in bad humour, my poor

Gillie. Have you been quarrelling with the cook, or did you get up on the wrong side of your bed?

Servant: There is times when it is hard not to be in a bad humour.

Guardian: What are you grumbling and hinting at?

Servant: There's times when it's hard to believe that witchcraft is gone out of the world.

Guardian: That is a thing that has been done away with in this Island through my government, and through enlightenment and through learning.

Servant: Maybe so. Maybe so.

Guardian: I suppose a three-legged chicken has come out of the shell, or a magpie has come before you in your path? Or maybe some token in the stars?

Servant: It would take more than that to put me astray.

Guardian: Whatever it is you had best tell it out.

Servant: To see lads of princes, sons of kings, and the makings of kings, that were mannerly and well behaved and as civil as a child a few hours ago, to be sitting in a corner at one time as if in dread of the light, and tricking and fooling and grabbing at other times.

Guardian: Oh, is that all! The poor lads. They're out of their habits because of their Godmother's Messengers coming. They are making merry and funning, thinking there might be messages for them or presents.

Servant: Funning is natural. But blowing their nose with their fingers is not natural.

Guardian: High spirits. Just to torment you in their joy.

Servant: To get a bit of chalk, and to make marks in the Hall of dancing, and to go playing hop-scotch.

Guardian: High spirits, high spirits! I never saw boys better behaved or more gentle or with more sweetness of speech. I am thinking there is not one among them but will earn the name of Honey-mouth.

Servant: Have it your own way. But is it a natural thing, I am asking, for the finger nails to make great growth in one day?

Guardian: Stop, stop, be quiet. Here now are the Dowager Messengers. (*Two old ladies in travelling costume appear; bowing low to them.*) You are welcome for the sake of her that sent you, and for your own sakes.

1st Dowager Messenger: We are come from the Court of the Godmother Queen, for news of the Princes now in your charge;

She hopes they have manners, are minded well, and never let run at large;

For she never has yet got over the fret, of their five little cousins were swept away.

Guardian: Let your mind be at ease, for you'll be well pleased with the youngsters you're going to see to-day.

They're learning the laws to speak and to pause—
may be orators then, or Parliament men.
2nd Dowager Messenger: Are they shielded
from harm?
Guardian:
In my sheltering arm;
Do their work and their play in a mannerly way
And go holding their nose, and tipped on their
toes,
If they pass through a street, that they'll not soil
their feet.
2nd Dowager Messenger: And next to good
manners and next to good looks . . .
Guardian:
I know what you'll say . . . she asks news of
the cooks;
I'm with her in putting them equal to books;
There's some rule by coaxing and some rule by
beating,
But my principle is, tempt them on with good
eating.
When everything's said, isn't Sparta as dead
As many a place never heard of black bread?
And as to a lad who a tartlet refuses,—
If Cato stewed parsnips he hated the Muses!
1st Dowager Messenger: And at meals are they
taught to behave as they ought?
Guardian:
You'll be well satisfied and the Queen will have
pride,

You will see every Prince use a fork with his mince,
And eating his peas like Alcibiades,
Who would sooner go mute than play on the flute
Lest it made him grimace and contorted his face.

1st Dowager Messenger: Oh, all that you say delights us to-day!

We'll have good news to bring of these sons of a king.

Servant: Here they are now coming.

(*Wrenboys in Princes' clothes come in awkwardly.*)

Guardian:

Now put out a chair.
Where these ladies may hear.
Come over, my boys . . . (Now what is that noise?)
Come here, take your places, and show us your faces,
And say out your task as these ladies will ask.
I would wish them to know how you say *Parlez-vous*,
And I'd like you to speak in original Greek
And make numeration, and add up valuation;
But to lead you with ease and on by degrees
In case you are shy in the visitors' eye
I will let you recite, as you easily might,
The kings of that Island that no longer are silent
But ask recognition and to take a position—
(Though if stories are true they ran about blue,

While we in Hy-Brasil wore our silks to a frazzle—)
So the rhymes you may say that I heard you to-day;
And the opening will fall on the youngest of all.

Servant: Let you stand up now and do as you are bid. (*Touches 5th Wrenboy.*)

Guardian: Go on, my child, say out your lesson. William the First as the Conqueror known. . . . (*Boy puts finger in mouth and hangs his head.*)

Ah, he is shy. Don't be affrighted, go on now; don't you remember it?

5th Wrenboy: I do not.

Guardian: Try it again now. You said it off quite well this morning.

5th Wrenboy: It fails me.

Guardian: Now I will give you a start; "William the First as the Conqueror known,

At the Battle of Hastings ascended the throne . . ." Say that now.

5th Wrenboy: (*Nudging 4th.*) Let you word it.

4th Wrenboy: (*To Guardian.*) Let you word it again, sir.

Guardian: "William the First as the Conqueror known."

4th Wrenboy: William the First as the conger-eel known. . . .

Guardian: What is that? You would not do it to vex me! Gillie is maybe right. There is something strange. . . . (*To another.*) You may try now. Go on to the next verse. "William called Rufus from having red hair." . . .

(*He does not answer.*) Say it anyone who knows. . . .

3rd Wrenboy: (*Putting up his hand.*) I know a man that has red hair!

All the Wrenboys: (*Cheerfully.*) So do I! So do I!

2nd Wrenboy: He lives in the wood beyond! He is no way good! He is an Ogre, a Grugach. . . .

1st Wrenboy: He can turn himself into the shape of a beast, or he can change his face at any time; sometimes he'll be that wicked you would think he was a wolf; he would skin you with his cat-o'-nine-tails!

Guardian: What gibberish are you talking?

2nd Wrenboy: He goes working underground to get gold!

3rd Wrenboy: It is minded by enchanted cats!

4th Wrenboy: They would tear in bits anyone that would find it!

Guardian: Now take care, lads, this is carrying a joke too far. I was wrong to begin with that silly history. Tell me out now the parts of speech.

"A noun's the name of anything
As school or garden, hoop or swing."

5th Wrenboy: An owl's the name of anything. . . .

Guardian: A *noun.*

5th Wrenboy: An *owl.*

Guardian: Don't pretend you don't know it.

5th Wrenboy: I do know it. I know an owl that sits in the cleft of the hollow sycamore and eats its fill of mice, till it can hardly put a stir out of itself.

Guardian: I do wish you would stop talking nonsense.

1st Wrenboy: It is not, but sense. It devoured ere yesterday a whole fleet of young rats.

2nd Wrenboy: It's as wise as King Solomon.

Guardian: Gillie was right. There is surely something gone wrong in their heads.

2nd Wrenboy: Go out yourself and you'll see are we wrong in the head! Inside in the old sycamore he is sitting through the daylight.

1st Dowager Messenger: There is something gone wrong in *somebody's* head.

2nd Dowager Messenger: (*Tapping her forehead.*) The poor Guardian; he is too long past his youth. It is well we came to look how things were going before it is too late.

1st Dowager Messenger: Ask them to say something they *do* know.

Guardian: Here, you're good at arithmetic, say now your numbers.

1st Wrenboy: Twelve coppers make a shilling. I never handled more than that.

Guardian: (*Angrily.*) Well, do as the lady said, tell us something you *do* know.

2nd Wrenboy: (*Standing up, excited.*) I know the way to make bird-lime, steeping willow rods in the stream. . . .

3rd Wrenboy: I know how to use my fists; I knocked a tinker bigger than myself.

4th Wrenboy: I am the best at wrestling. I knocked *him*self. (*Pointing at 3rd.*)

5th Wrenboy: I that can skin a fawn after catching him running!

2nd Dowager Messenger. Where now did you get that learning?

5th Wrenboy: Here and there, rambling the woods, sleeping out at night. I would never starve in any place where grass grows!

1st Dowager Messenger: This is worse than neglect. The poor old Guardian the Queen put her trust in must be in his dotage.

Guardian: (*Hastily.*) Here, there is at least one thing you will not fail in. Take the harp (***hands it to the 1st Wrenboy***) and draw out of it sweet sounds. (*To Dowager Messengers.*) He can play a tune so sweet it has been known to send all the hearers into a sound sleep. Here now, touch the strings with all your skill.

(***1st Wrenboy bangs harp making a crash.***)

2nd Dowager Messenger: (***With hands to ears.***) Mercy! Our poor ears!

1st Dowager Messenger: That is the poorest mu ic we have ever heard.

2nd Dowager Messenger: That sound would

send no one into their sleep. It would be more likely to send them into Bedlam.

1st Dowager Messenger: Whatever they knew last year, they have forgotten it all now.

Guardian: (*Weeping into his handkerchief.*) I don't know what has come upon them! At noon they were the most charming lads in the whole world. Their memory seems to have left them!

2nd Dowager Messenger: It is as if another memory had come to them. They did not learn those wild tricks shut up in the garden.

Servant: (*To Boys.*) Can't ye behave nice and not ugly? (*To Guardian.*) You would not believe me a while ago. I said and I say still there is enchantment on them, and spells.

Guardian: Oh, I would be sorry to think such a thing. But they never went on this way in their greenest youth.

2nd Dowager Messenger: If there is a spell upon them what way can it be taken off?

Servant: It is what I always heard, that to make a rod of iron red in the fire, and to burn the enchantment out of them is the only way.

Guardian: Oh, boys, do you hear that! You would not like to be burned with a red hot rod! Say out now what at all is the matter with you? What is it you feel within you that is putting you from your gentle ways?

1st Wrenboy: The thing that I feel in me is

hunger. The thing I would wish to feel inside me is a good fistful of food.

1st Dowager Messenger: They have been starved and stinted! It would kill their Godmother on the moment if she was aware of that!

Guardian: It is a part of their playgame. They have everything they ask.

2nd Wrenboy: I did not eat a farthing's worth since yesterday.

3rd Wrenboy: My teeth are rusty with the want of food!

4th Wrenboy: I want some dinner!

5th Wrenboy: We want something to eat!

Guardian: Give them whatever you have ready for them, Gillie.

Servant: (*Giving the plates.*) Here is the supper ye gave orders for this morning.

1st Wrenboy: What is it at all?

Servant: It is your choice thing. Jellies and grapes from Spain.

2nd Wrenboy: (Pushing away grapes.) Berries! I thought to get better than berries from the bush.

3rd Wrenboy: There's not much satisfaction in berries!

4th Wrenboy: If it was a pig's foot now; or as much as a potato with a bit of dripping.

5th Wrenboy: (*Looking at jelly.*) What now is this? It has like the appearance of frog spawn.

1st Wrenboy: Or the leavings of a fallen star.

5th Wrenboy: Shivering it is and shaking. It's not natural! (*Drops his plate.*)

4th Wrenboy: There is nothing here to satisfy our need.

2nd Dowager Messenger: I am nearly sorry for them, poor youngsters. When they were but little toddlers they never behaved like that at home.

3rd Wrenboy: It's the starvingest place ever I was in!

1st Dowager Messenger: There must be something in what they say. They would not ask for food if they were not in need of it. And the Guardian making so much talk about his table and his cooks. We cannot go home and report that they have no learning and no food.

2nd Dowager Messenger: As to learning I don't mind. But as to food, I would not wish to leave them without it for the night. They might be as small as cats in the morning.

Guardian: They are dreaming when they say they are in want of food.

1st Dowager Messenger: It is a dream that will waken up their Godmother.

Servant: Look ma'am, at the table behind you, and you will see is this a scarce house! That is what is set out for yourselves, ma'am, lobsters from Aughanish! A fat turkey from the barley gardens! A spiced and larded sucking pig! Cakes and sweets and all sorts! It is not the want of provision was ever brought against us up to this!

2nd Dowager Messenger: If all this is for us, we would sooner give it up to those poor children. (*To Wrenboys.*) Here, my dears, we will not eat while you are in want of food. We will give it all to you.

1st Wrenboy: Is it that we can have what is on that table?

2nd Dowager Messenger: You may, and welcome.

1st Wrenboy: (*With a shout.*) Do you hear that news! Come on now. Take your chance! I'll have the first start! Skib scab! Hip, hip, hooray!

(*They rush at table and upset it flinging themselves on the food.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

ACT III

The Hall of Justice. It is nearly dawn. The last of the Princes is getting in through the window. They are wearing their masks.

Ogre: (*Outside door to left.*) Open now the door for myself.

1st Prince: No, we will get rid of him now. Let the Grugach stay outside.

2nd Prince: That will be best. He cannot break the bars of this door, or get round over the high wall to the door on the other side.

3rd Prince: I am sore with the blows he put on us, driving us before him through the wood.

4th Prince: Let us call to the Guardian, and let him deal with him. He can bring his foot soldiers and his guns.

5th Prince: A villain that Ogre is and a thief, wanting to steal away the golden-handled sword. But we would not tell him where it was, and he never will find it under the step of the Judge's chair. (*Lifts top of step, takes out sword and puts it back again.*)

Ogre: (*Outside.*) Are ye going to open the door?

1st Prince: It is a great thing to have that strong door between us.

2nd Prince: Take care would he break it in.

3rd Prince: No fear. It would make too much noise. It would bring every person in the house running.

4th Prince: Let us go quick and call the Guardian.

5th Prince: What will he say seeing us in these clothes? He will be vexed with us.

1st Prince: It was folly of us running away. But he will forgive us, knowing it will teach us better sense.

2nd Prince: Come to him then, I don't mind what he will do to us so long as we are safe from the terrible Grugach of an Ogre. (*All go to right door, it opens and Ogre bursts in.*)

Ogre: Ye thought to deceive me did ye? Ye thought to bar me out and to keep me out? And I after minding you and caring you these seven years!

3rd Prince: What way did you get in?

Ogre: It's easy for me to get in any place. If I had a mind I could turn into a house fly and come through the lockhole of the door. It's much if I don't change the whole lot of ye into small birds, and myself to a hawk going through you! Or, into frightened mice, and I myself into a starving cat! It's much if I don't skin you with this whip, and grind your bones as fine as rape seed!

4th Prince: I will call for help! (*Tries to shout.*)

Ogre: (*Putting hand over his mouth and lifting whip.*) Shout now and welcome, and it is bare bones will be left of you! If it wasn't that I need you to search out the golden-handled sword for me I'd throttle the whole of ye as easy as I'd squeeze an egg! Come on now! Show me where the treasure is hid.

5th Prince: How would we know?

Ogre: Didn't I send ye spying it out, and if it fails ye to make it out, I'll boil and bake you!

1st Prince: (*Looking about and pointing to end of room.*) It might be there.

Ogre: What way would it be on the bare floor? Search it out.

2nd Prince: (*Looking under a bench.*) It might be here.

Ogre: It is not there.

3rd Prince: (*Looking up chimney.*) This would be a good hiding-place.

Ogre: (*Looks up.*) There is nothing in it, only an old nest of a jackdaw,—a bundle of bare twigs. Trying to deceive me you are and to lead me astray.

4th Prince: It might be on the shelf.

Ogre: Stop your chat unless you have something worth saying.

5th Prince: (*Sitting down on step under which sword is hidden.*) Are you certain there is any treasure at all?

Ogre: You are humbugging and making a fool of me! (*Lashes whip and seizes him.*) Get up now out of that! (*Drags him up and taps board.*) There is a hollow sort of a sound. . . . That is a sort of place where a treasure might be hid. (*Drags up board.*) I see something shining. (*Pulls out sword.*) Oh, it is a lovely sword! And the handle of pure gold. The best I ever seen!

1st Prince: (*To the others.*) I'll make a run now and call out and awaken all in the house! (*Is going towards door.*)

Ogre: (*Seizing him.*) You'd make your escape would you?

1st Prince: (*Calling out.*) Ring the big bell, ring the bell! I forgot it till now.

(*They pull a bell-rope and bell is heard clanging.*)

Ogre: (*Rushing at them as they ring it.*) I'll stop that!

(*Voices are heard at door to right. Ogre rushes to other door.*)

2nd Prince: I'll get the sword from him. (*Snatches it away as Ogre is rushing at him. Servant and Guardian come in.*)

Guardian: What is going on! (*Blows a whistle.*) Here, soldiers of the guard!

(*Feet are heard marching and bugle blowing at left door. Ogre rapidly slips off his mask, and appears as a harmless old man.*)

Guardian: Thieves! Robbers! Burglars!

Here, soldiers, surround the place; who are these ruffians? Murder! Robbery! Fire!

(*Two soldiers come in.*)

Servant: They are the very same youngsters were at our door this morning, doing their play; those Wrenboys!

Guardian: They are thieves. There is one of them bringing away my gold-handled sword. (*He and Servant seize sword.*)

Ogre: (*Coming forward and bowing low.*) It is time for you to come, your honour my lordship! I am proud to see you coming! It was I myself that rang the bell and that called and awakened you, where I would not like to see the place robbed and left bare by these scum of the world!

All the Princes: Oh! Oh! Oh!

Guardian: What have you to do with it? Where do you come from?

Ogre: An honest poor man I am. . . .

Servant: You have a queer wild sort of a dress.

Ogre: Making a living I do be, dressing up as a hobgoblin and a bogey man to get an odd copper from a mother here and there, would be wishful to frighten a stubborn child from bawling or from tricks. Passing the door I was, and hearing a noise I looked in, and these young villains were after rising a board and taking out that sword you seen in their hands. It is then that I made a clamour with the bell.

(*The Princes laugh.*)

Guardian: Who are they at all?

Ogre: It is I myself say it; they are the terror of the whole district.

1st Prince: You may save your breath and stop that talk. This gentleman knows us well. He knows us and will recognise us.

Guardian: I do recognise you. I saw you but yesterday.

2nd Prince: There now, what do you say?

Guardian: You are those vagabond Wrenboys that came tricking and begging to my gate.

Princes: Oh! Oh! Oh!

Ogre: That's it! Spying round they were! Thinking to do a robbery! Robbery they're after doing!

3rd Prince: We were doing no such thing!

Guardian: You were! I stopped you making off with my sword of Justice.

Ogre: If it wasn't for me hindering them they would have it swept.

Guardian: That was very honest of you.

4th Prince: (*Rushing at Ogre.*) It is you that are a rogue and a thief!

Other Princes: Throw him down while we have the chance. (*They surround him.*)

Guardian: Silence! Don't make that disturbance! I felt a suspicion yesterday the first time I saw your faces there was villainy hidden beneath the dust that was on your cheeks.

4th Prince: Listen to us, listen!

Guardian: And whatever I thought then, you are seventeen times more wicked looking now! And the very scum of the roads!

5th Prince: Oh, have you forgotten your nurslings!

Guardian: It is well you reminded me of them. (*To Servant.*) Go now and bring the young Princes here till they will see justice done! They are maybe gone a bit wild and foolish since yesterday, put out by those Dowager Messengers. But whatever they were at their worst, they are King George compared with these!

1st Prince: You *must* listen!

Guardian: Must! What is that language! That is a word was never said to me since I was made the Queen's Chamberlain. Here! Put a gag upon their mouths! (*Soldiers do so, tying a handkerchief on mouth of each.*) Tie their hands behind them with ropes. (*This is done.*) Rapscallions! Do they think to terrify and command me! I that am not only Governor of the Island but am Supreme Judge whenever I come into this Court.

Ogre: That is very good and very right! Keep the gag in their mouth! You wouldn't like to be listening to the things they were saying a while ago! They were giving out great impudence and very disrespectful talk!

Guardian: Give me here my Judge's wig and my gown! (*Puts them on.*) Where now are the young Princes?

Servant: They are coming now.

Guardian: It will be a great help in their education seeing justice done by me, as straight as was ever done by Aristides. Give me here that book of punishments and rewards. I'll see what is bad enough for these lads! (*He consults book.*)

Servant: Here now are the Princes.

(*Wrenboys come in wearing Princes' clothes.*)

1st Wrenboy: (*To another.*) Do you see who it is that is in it?

2nd Wrenboy: It is the young Princes in our clothes!

3rd Wrenboy: What in the world wide brought them here? Believe me it was through some villainy of the Grugach.

4th Wrenboy: What at all has happened?

5th Wrenboy: Go ask them what it was brought them, or what they came doing.

1st Wrenboy: (*To Princes.*) What is it brought you here so soon?

(*Princes shake their heads.*)

2nd Wrenboy: (*Coming back.*) There is a gag on their mouths!

3rd Wrenboy: (*Going and looking.*) Their hands are tied with a rope.

4th Wrenboy: They had not the wit to stand against the Grugach; it is not long till they were brought to trouble.

5th Wrenboy: It was seventeen times worse for them to be under him than for ourselves that

was used to him, and to his cruelty and his ways.

1st Wrenboy: It was bad enough for ourselves. We were not built for roguery.

(*The Dowager Messengers rushing in.*)

Dowager Messengers: (*Together.*) What is going on? What has happened?

Guardian: What you see before you has happened. Those young thieves came to try and to rob the house. They were found by myself in the very act of bringing away my golden-handled sword! They were stopped by this honest man. (*Points to Ogre.*)

1st Dowager Messenger: There would seem to be a great deal of wickedness around this place!

Guardian: I'll put a stop to it! I'll use my rights as Judge! To have that sort of villainy running through the Island, it would come through walls of glass or of marble, and lead away the best.

2nd Dowager Messenger: There must be something gone wrong in the stars, our own young princes having gone wild out of measure, and these young vagabonds doing no less than housebreaking! It is hard to live!

Ogre: Indeed, ma'am, it would be a great blessing to the world if all the boys in it could be born grown up.

Guardian: (*Sighing.*) I, myself, am beginning to have that same opinion.

1st Dowager Messenger: And so am I myself. Young men have strength and beauty, and old men have knowledge and wisdom, but as to boys! After what we saw a while ago in the supper room!

Servant: The Court is about to sit! Take your places!

(*Wrenboys make for the dock and Princes the jury-box.*)

Guardian: What do you mean prisoners, going up there, that is the place for honourable men! For a jury! It is here in the criminals' dock your place is.

Servant: (*To Wrenboys.*) Oh, that is the wrong place you're in. That is for the wicked and the poor that are brought to be tried and condemned.

1st Wrenboy: It is a place the like of that I was put one time I was charged before a magistrate for snaring rabbits.

Servant: Silence in the Court! The Judge is about to speak!

Guardian: (*Reading out of book.*)

It's laid down in a clause of the Cretian laws,
That were put through a filter by Solon,
That for theft the first time, though a capital crime
A criminal may keep his poll on.
Though (*consults another book*) some jurists believe
That a wretch who can thieve,
Has earned a full stop, not a colon.

Ogre: That was said by a better than Solon.
Guardian:
And the book says in sum, to cut off the left thumb,
May be penalty enough for a warning;
Though (*looks at another book*) the commentors say
That one let off that way
Will be thieving again before morning.
Ogre: So he will, and the jury suborning.
Guardian:
For the second offence, as the crime's more immense,
Take the thumb off the *right* hand instead;
And the third time he'll steal, without any appeal,
The hangman's to whip off his head.
Ogre:
Very right to do so, for a thief as we know,
Isn't likely to steal when he's dead.
2nd Dowager Messenger:
You won't order the worst, as this crime is the first,
It's a pity if they have to swing.
Guardian:
In the Commentors' sense, a *primal* offence
Is as much an impossible thing
As a stream without source, a blow struck without force,
Or leaves without roots in the spring.
Ogre: Or a catapult wanting a sling.
Guardian:
But although this case is proved on its face
To be what is called *a priori*

I cannot refuse to consider the views
Of the amiable lady before me. (*Bows to 2nd Dowager Messenger.*)
In compliance to her I am ready to err
On the side that she leans to, of mercy,
For she has a kind tongue, and the prisoners are young;
But that they may not live to curse me,
I give out my decree, the *left* thumb shall be
Kept in Court till the next time they'll come.
And now if you please let whoever agrees
With my pledge turn down his own thumb.

1st Dowager Messenger: It is very just and right. (*Turns down hers.*)

Ogre: You're letting them off too easy. They're a bad example to the world. But to take the thumb off them is better than nothing! (*Turns down both his thumbs.*)

Guardian: (*To Wrenboys.*) Well, my dear pupils, I don't see you turn down your thumbs.

1st Wrenboy: We cannot do it. (*They cover their faces with their hands.*)

Ogre: Get on so. I never saw the work I'd sooner do than checking youngsters!

Guardian: Where is the Executioner?

Servant: I sent seeking him a while ago, thinking he might be needed.

Guardian: Bring him in.

Servant: He is not in it. There was so little business for him this long time under your own

peaceable rule, that he is after leaving us, and taking a job in a slaughter house out in foreign.

2nd Dowager Messenger: Maybe that is a token we should let them off.

Ogre: (*Briskly.*) I am willing to be useful; give me here a knife or a hatchet!

Servant: (*To Ogre.*) You need not be pushing yourself forward. (*To Guardian.*) There is a stranger of an Executioner chanced to be passing the road, just as I sent out, and he looking for work. He said he would do the job for a four-penny bit and his dinner, that he is sitting down to now.

Guardian: (*Sitting up straight and taking up sword.*)

Bring him in quick. It often seems a curious thing that I,
Who in my ordinary clothes would hardly hurt a fly,
Hold to the rigour of the law when I put on gown and wig,
As if for mere humanity I didn't care a fig.
For once I'm seated on the bench I do not shrink or flinch
From the reddest laws of Draco, or the practice of Judge Lynch.

Servant: (*At door.*) Here he is now.

(*Jester comes in, disguised as Executioner, a long cloak with hood over his head.*)

Guardian: Here is the sword (*hands it to him*

and reads), "In case of the first act of theft the left thumb is to be struck off." There are the criminals before you. That is what you have to do.

Jester: (*Taking the sword.*) Stretch out your hands! There is hurry on me. I was sitting at the dinner I engaged for. I was called away from the first mouthful, and I would wish to go back to the second mouthful that is getting cold.

Guardian: (*Relenting.*) Maybe now the fright would be enough to keep them from crimes from this out. They are but young.

Jester: (*To Princes.*) Don't be keeping me waiting! Put out now your hands. (*They shake their heads.*)

Servant: They cannot do that, being bound.

Jester: If you will not stretch out your hands when I ask you, I will strike off your heads without asking! (*Flourishes sword.*)

Guardian: (*Standing up.*) I did not empower you to go so far as that! It is without my authority!

Jester: You have given over the power of the law to the power of the sword. It must take its way!

Guardian: I will not give in to that! I have all authority here!

Jester: If you grow wicked with the Judge's wig on your head, so do I with this sword in my hand! You called me in to do a certain business and I am going to do it! I am not going

to get a bad name put on me for breach of contract! If a labourer is given piece work cutting thistles with a hook he is given leave to do it, or a rat catcher doing away with vermin in the same way! He is not bid after his trouble to let them go loose out of his bag! And why would an Executioner that is higher again in the profession be checked. Isn't my pride in my work the same as theirs? And along with that, let me tell you I belong to a Trades Union!

(*Guardian moans and covers his face.*)

(*To the Princes.*) Kneel down now! Where you kept me so long waiting and that the Judge attempted to interfere with me, I have my mind made up to make an end of you! (*Holds up sword.*)

1st Wrenboy: (*Rushing forward and putting his arms about Prince.*) You must not touch him! These lads never did any harm!

2nd Wrenboy: (*Protecting a Prince.*) It is we ourselves are to be punished if anyone must be punished.

3rd Wrenboy: They are innocent whoever is to blame.

Jester: Take their place so! Someone must be put an end to.

(*All the Wrenboys kneel.*)

1st Wrenboy: Here we are so. We changed places with them for our own pleasure, thinking to lead a prince's life, and if there is anyone must

suffer by reason of that change let it be ourselves.

Jester: I'll take off their gags so and let them free.

(*He cuts cords of gags and hands, then throws some dust over all boys as before saying*):

Dust of Mullein leave the eyes
You made fail to recognise
Princes in their poor disguise;
Princes all, had men clear eyes!

(*The Princes throw off their masks.*)

1st Prince: It is all a mistake! Oh, Guardian, don't you know now that we are your nurslings and your wards! Look at the royal mark upon our arm, that we brought with us into the world. (*They turn up sleeves and show their arms.*)

2nd Dowager Messenger: I am satisfied without looking at the royal sign. I have been looking at their finger nails. Those other nails (*pointing to Wrenboys*) have never been touched with a soapy brush.

2nd Prince: It is strange you did not recognise us. It was that Jester yesterday when we changed out coats that threw a dust of disguise between you and us.

1st Dowager Messenger: Was it that these lads robbed you of your clothes?

3rd Prince: Not at all.

4th Prince: We ourselves that were discontented and wishful to change places with them.

Guardian: A very foolish thing, and that I have never read of in any of my histories.

5th Prince: We were the first to wish the change. It is we should be blamed.

5th Wrenboy: No, but put the blame on us! The Wrenboys you seen yesterday.

Guardian: Ah, be quiet, how do I know who you are, or if ever I saw you before! My poor head is going round and round.

1st Wrenboy: Now do you know us! (*All recite "The Wren, the Wren, the King of All Birds." Give first verse.*)

Guardian: (*Stopping his ears.*) Oh, stop it! That makes my poor head worse again.

2nd Wrenboy: (*Pulling up sleeve.*) If you had chanced to see our right arm you would recognise us. We were not without bringing a mark into the world with us, if it is not royal itself.

(*Wrenboys strip their arms.*)

1st Dowager Messenger: What is he talking about? (*Seizes arm and looks at it.*)

2nd Dowager Messenger: It is the same mark as is on the princes, the sign and token of a King!

1st Dowager Messenger: It is certain these must be their five little royal cousins, that were stolen away from the coast.

1st Wrenboy: If we were brought away it was by that Grugach that has kept us in his service through the years.

2nd Dowager Messenger: It is no wonder they

took to one another. It was easy to know by the way they behaved they had in them royal blood.

(*The Boys turn to each other, the Ogre is slipping out.*)

Jester: (*Throwing off his cloak and showing his green ragged clothes.*) Stop where you are!

Ogre: Do your best! You cannot hinder me! I have spells could change the whole of ye to a cairn of grey stones! (*Makes signs with his hands.*)

Jester: (*In a terrible voice.*) Are you thinking to try your spells against *mine?*

Ogre: (*Trembling and falling on his knees.*) Oh, spare me! Hold your hand! Do not use against me your spells of life and death! I know you now! I know you well through your ragged dress! What are my spells beside yours? You the great Master of all magic and all enchantments, Manannan, Son of the Sea!

Jester: Yes, I am Manannan, that men are apt to call a Jester and a Fool, and a Disturber, and a Mischief-maker, upsetting the order of the world and making confusion in its order and its ways. (*Recites or sings.*)

For when I see a master
Hold back his hireling's fee
I shake my pepper castor
Into his sweetened tea!

And when I see a plan make
The Birds that watch us frown,

I come and toss the pancake
And turn it upside down!

In this I follow after
Lycurgus who was wise;
To the little god of laughter
I make my sacrifice!

And now here is my word of command! Everyone into his right place!

Ogre: Spare me! Let me go this time!

Jester: Go out now! I will not bring a blemish on this sword by striking off your ugly head. But as you have been through seven years an enemy to these young boys, keeping them in ignorance and dirt, they that are sons of a king, I cross and command you to go groping through holes and dirt and darkness through three times seven years in the shape of a rat, with every boy, high or low, gentle or simple, your pursuer and your enemy. And along with that I would recommend you to keep out of the way of your own enchanted cats!

(*Ogre gives a squeal and creeps away on all fours.*)

Guardian: I think I will give up business and go back to my old trade of Chamberlain and of shutting out draughts from the Court. The weight of years is coming on me, and it is time for me to set my mind to some quiet path.

1st Dowager Messenger: Come home with us so, and help us to attend to our cats, that they will be able to destroy the rats of the world.

2nd Dowager Messenger: (*To Princes.*) It is best for you come to your Godmother's Court, as your Guardian is showing the way.

1st Prince: We may come and give news of our doings at the end of a year and a day.

But now we will go with our comrades to learn their work and their play.

2nd Prince: For lying on silken cushions, or stretched on a feathery bed.

We would long again for the path by the lake, and the wild swans overhead.

3rd Prince: Till we'll harden our bodies with wrestling and get courage to stand in a fight.

4th Prince: And not to be blind in the woods or in dread of the darkness of night.

1st Wrenboy: And we who are ignorant blockheads, and never were reared to know

The art of the languaged poets, it's along with you we will go.

5th Prince: Come show us the wisdom of woods, and the way to outrun the wild deer,

Till we'll harden our minds with courage, and be masters of hardship and fear.

2nd Wrenboy: But you are candles of knowledge, and we'll give you no ease or peace,

Till you'll learn us manners and music, and news of the Wars of Greece.

1st Prince: Come on, we will help one another, and going together we'll find,

Joy with those great companions, Earth, Water, Fire, and Wind. (*They join hands.*)

Jester: It's likely you'll do great actions, for there is an ancient word,

That comradeship is better than the parting of the sword,

And that if ever two natures should join and grow into one,

They will do more together than the world has ever done.

So now I've ended my business, and I'll go, for my road is long,

But be sure the Jester will find you out, if ever things go wrong!

(*He goes off singing.*)

And so I follow after
Lycurgus who was wise;
To the little god of laughter
I pay my sacrifice!

CURTAIN

NOTES FOR THE JESTER

I was asked one Christmas by a little schoolboy to write a play that could be acted at school; and in looking for a subject my memory went back to a story I had read in childhood called "The Discontented Children," where, though I forget its incidents, the gamekeeper's children changed places for a while with the children of the Squire, and I thought I might write something on these lines. But my mind soon went miching as our people (and Shakespeare) would say, and broke through the English hedges into the unbounded wonder-world. Yet it did not quite run out of reach of human types, for having found some almost illegible notes, I see that at the first appearance of Manannan I had put in brackets the initials "G.B.S." And looking now at the story of that Great Jester, in the history of the ancient gods, I see that for all his quips and mischief and "tricks and wonders," he came when he was needed to the help of Finn and the Fianna, and gave good teaching to the boy-hero, Cuchulain; and I read also that "all the food he would use would be a vessel of sour milk or a few crab-apples. And there never was any music sweeter than the music he used to be playing."

I have without leave borrowed a phrase from "The Candle of Vision," written by my liberal fellow-

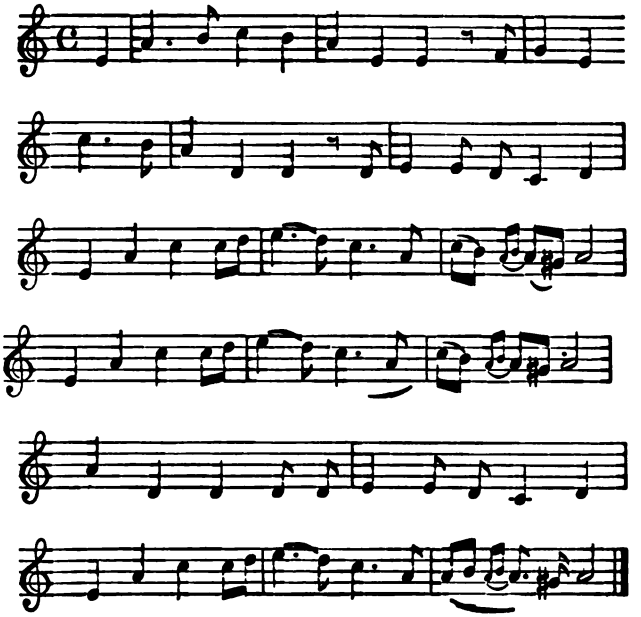
countryman, A. E., where he says, "I felt at times as one raised from the dead, made virginal and pure, who renews exquisite intimacies with the divine companions, with Earth, Water, Air, and Fire." And I think he will forgive me for quoting another passage now from the same book, for I think it must have been in my mind when I wrote of my Wrenboys: "The lands of Immortal Youth which flush with magic the dreams of childhood, for most sink soon below far horizons and do not again arise. For around childhood gather the wizards of the darkness and they baptize it and change its imagination of itself, as in the Arabian tales of enchantment men were changed by sorcerers who cried, 'Be thou beast or bird.' So . . . is the imagination of life about itself changed and one will think he is a worm in the sight of Heaven, he who is but a god in exile. . . . What palaces they were born in, what dominions they are rightly heir to, are concealed from them as in the fairy tale the stolen prince lives obscurely among the swineherd. Yet at times men do not remember, in dreams or in the deeps of sleep, they still wear sceptre and diadem and partake of the banquet of the gods."

The Wrenboys still come to our door at Coole on St. Stephen's Day, as they used in my childhood to come to Roxborough, but it is in our bargain that the wren itself must be symbolic, unmolested, no longer killed in vengeance for that one in the olden times that awakened the sentinels of the enemy Danes by pecking at crumbs on a drum. And, indeed, these last two or three years the rhymes concerning that

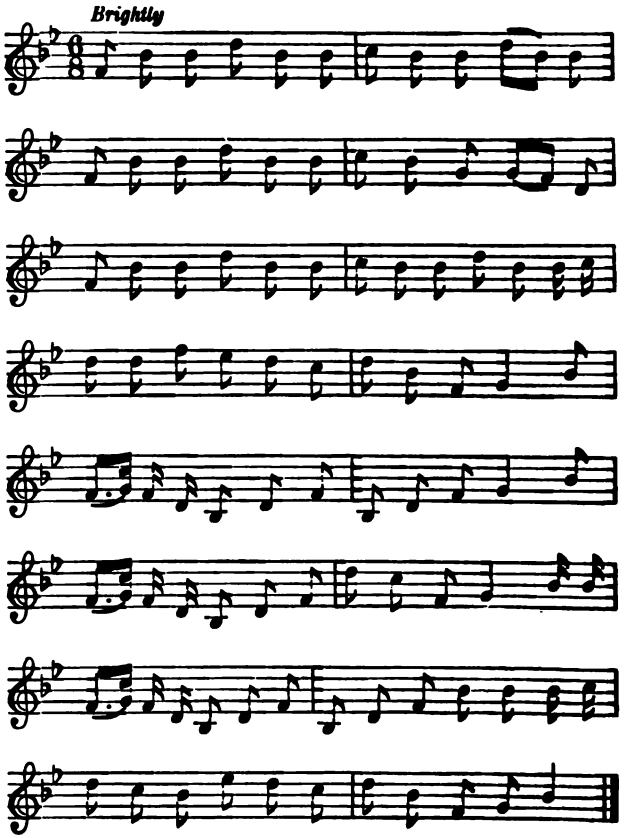
old history have been lessened, and their place taken by "The Soldiers Song."

I think the staging of the play is easy. The Ogre's hut may be but a shallow front scene, a curtain that can be drawn away. The masks are such as might be used by Wrenboys, little paper ones, such as one finds in a Christmas cracker, held on with a bit of elastic, and would help to get the change into the eyes of the audience, which Manannan's Mullein-dust may not have reached.

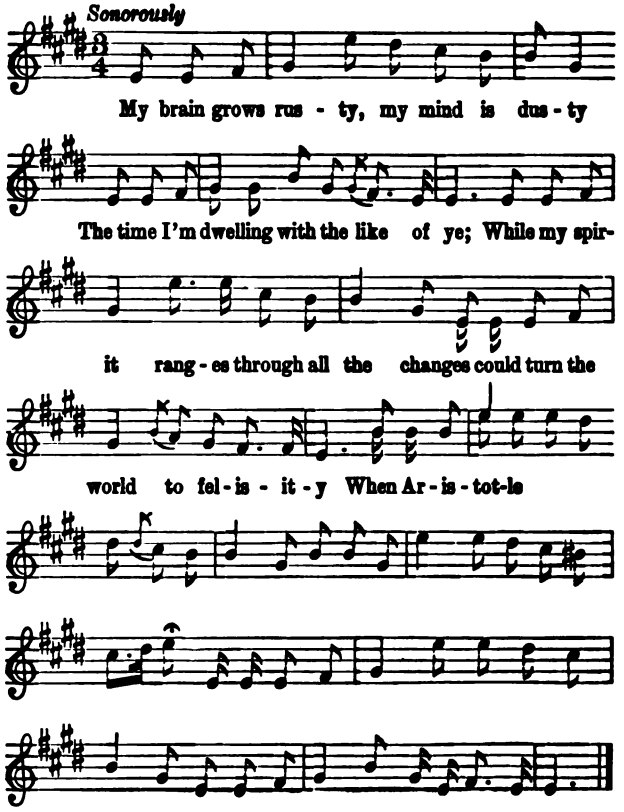
Air: "Shule Aroon"



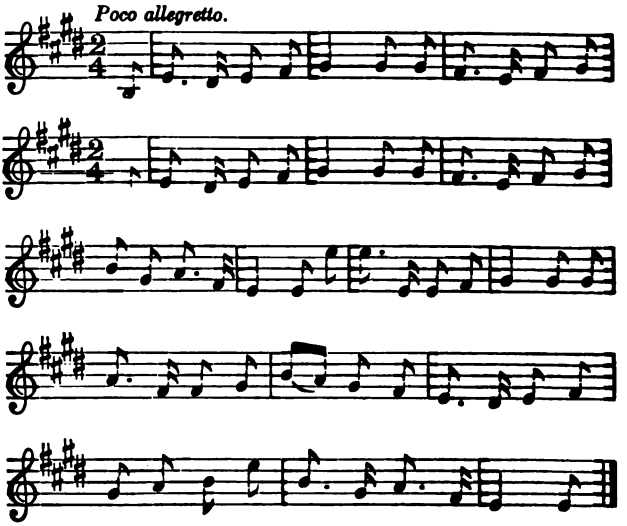
Air: "Mo Bhuachailin Buidhe"



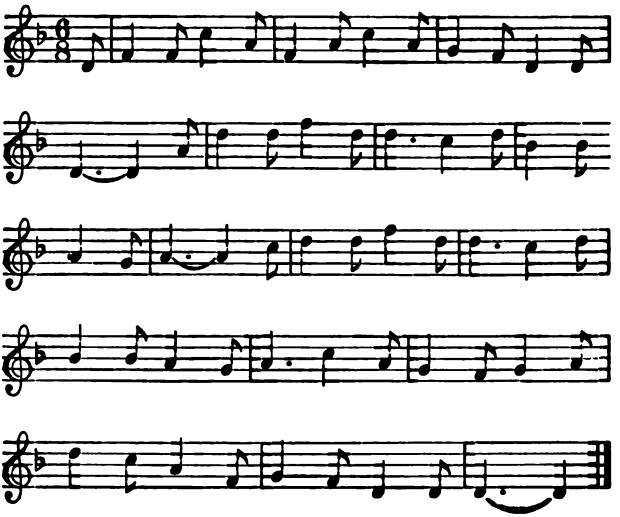
Air: "The Bells of Shandon"



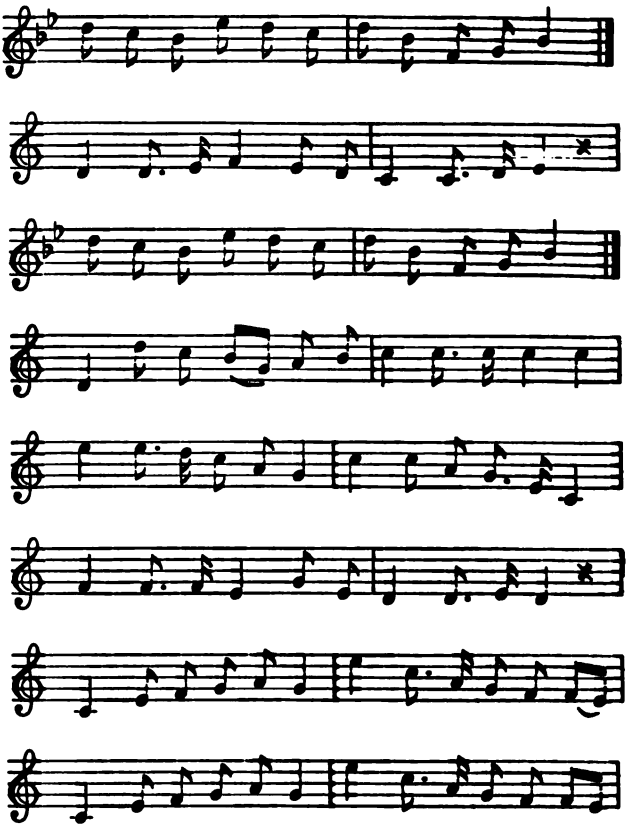
The Time I've Lost in Wooing



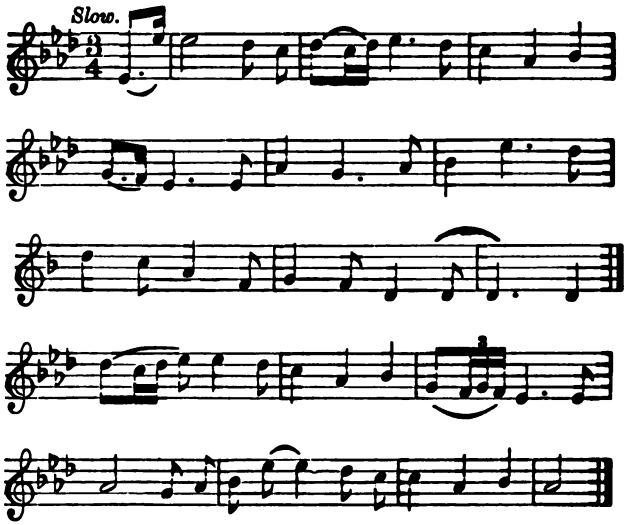
My Molly-O



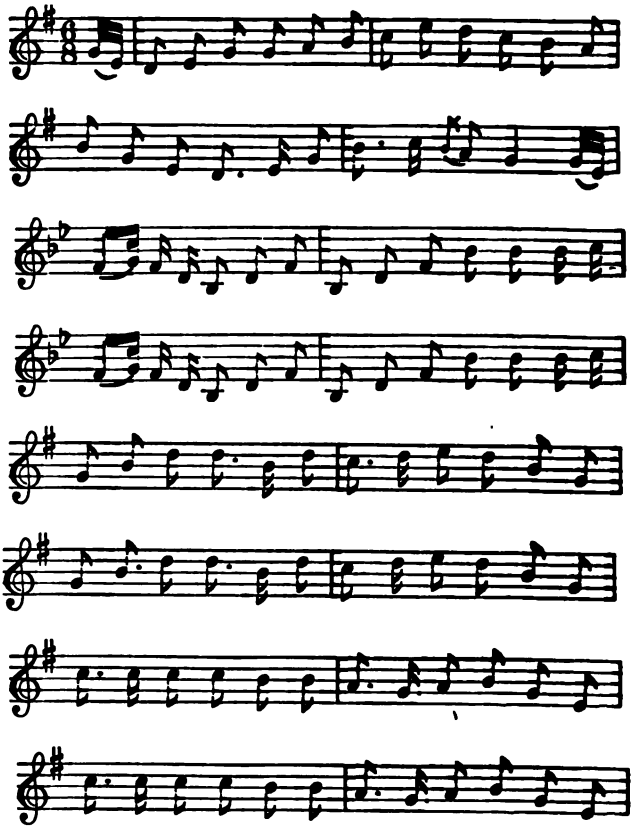
Air: "O Donall Abu"



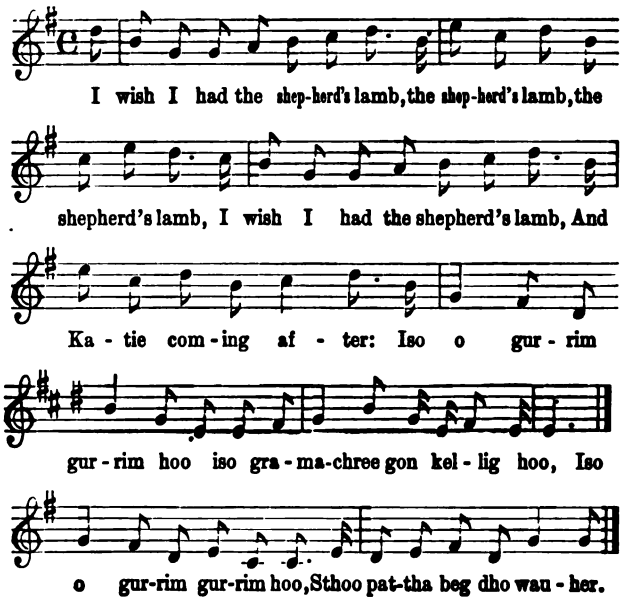
The Bard of Armagh



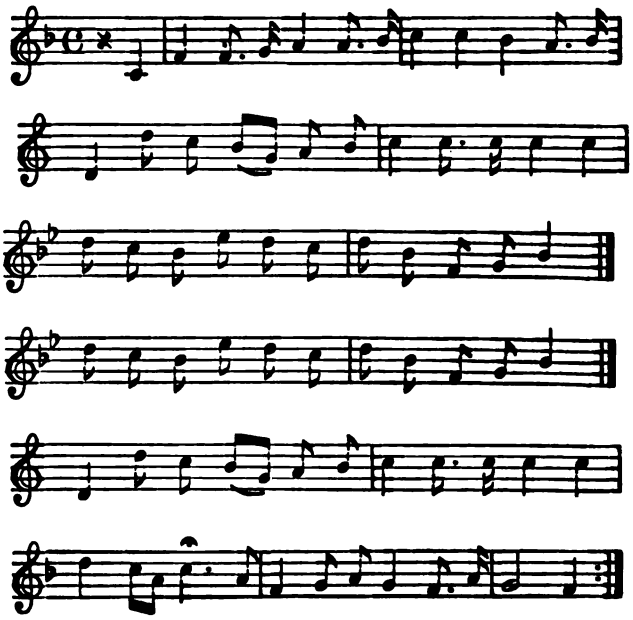
Air: "Dear Harp of My Country"



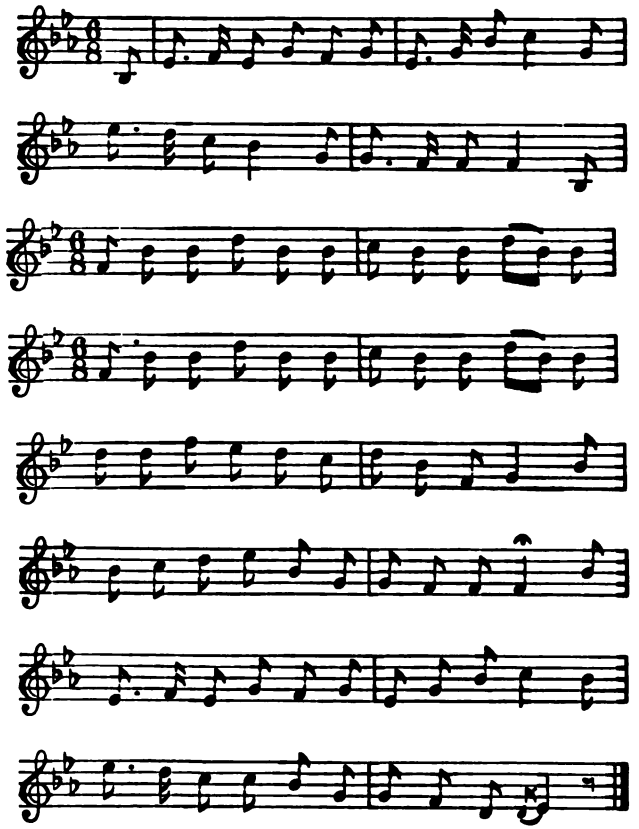
I wish I had the shepherd's lamb



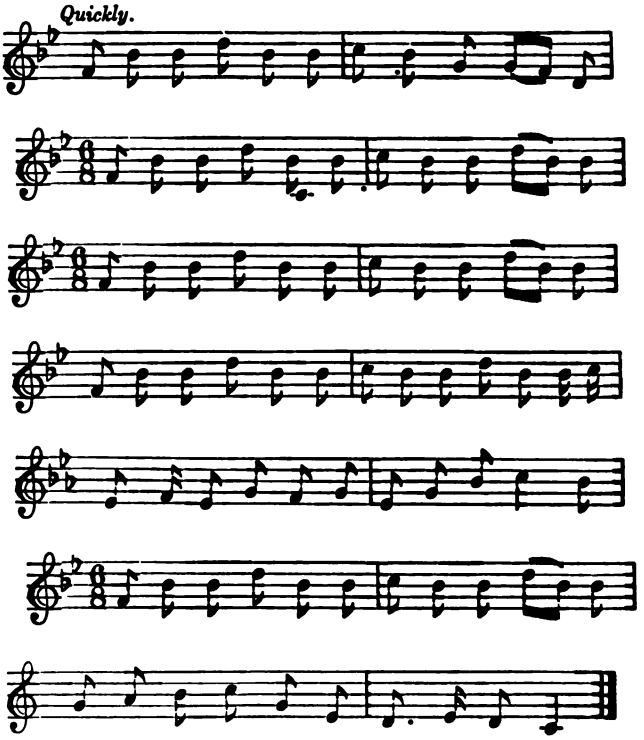
Air: "Let Erin Remember"



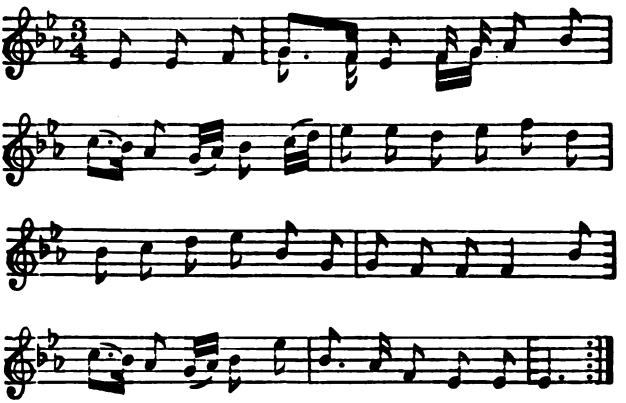
Air: "And doth not a meeting like this"



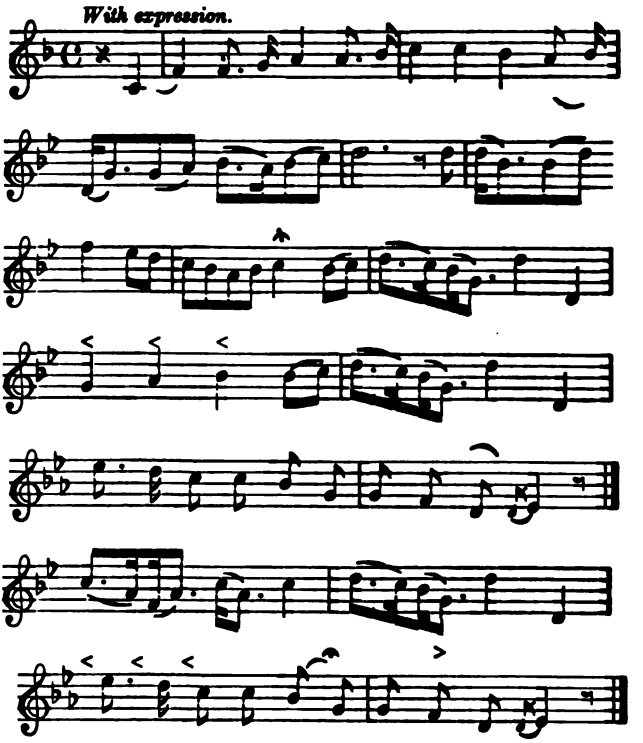
Garryowen



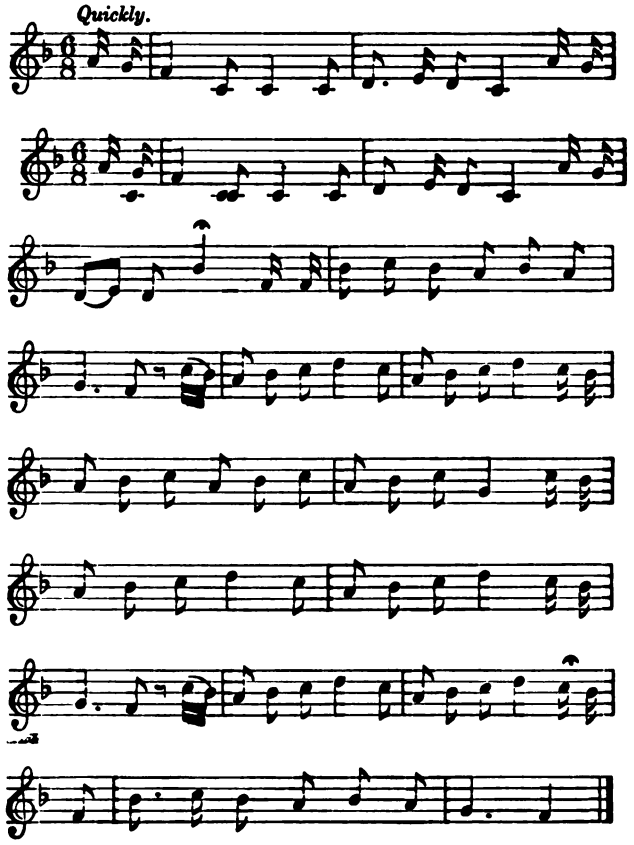
Air: "O Bay of Dublin"



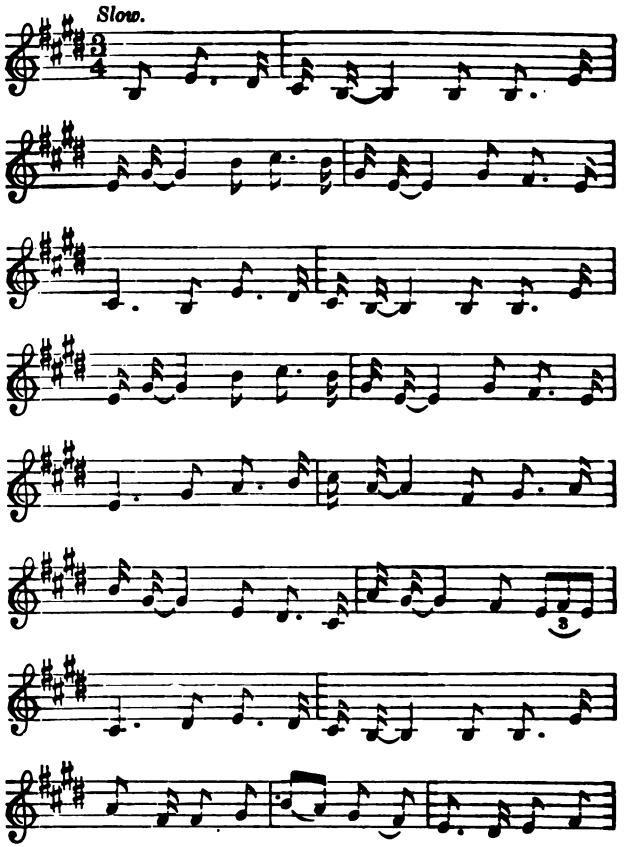
The Cruiskeen Lán



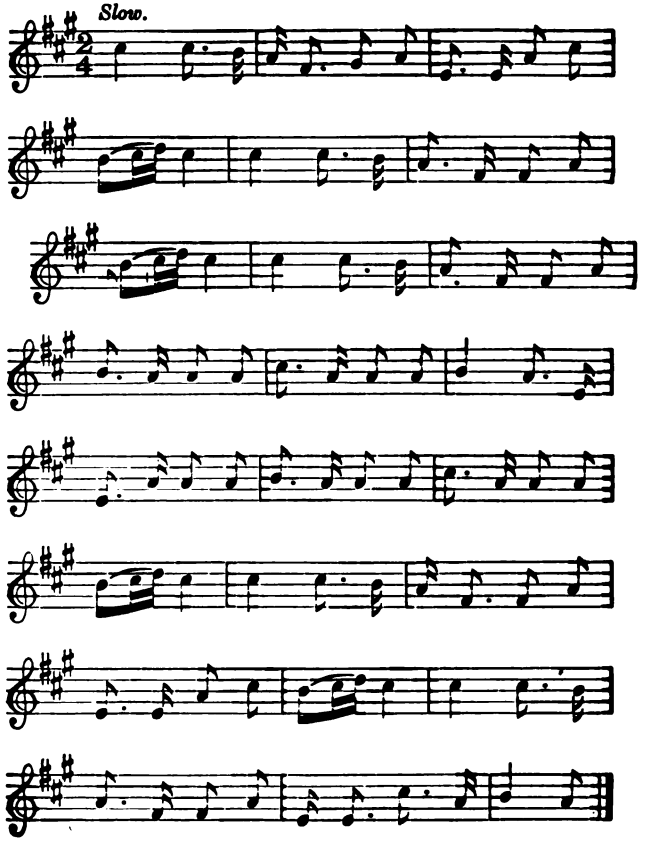
The Beautiful City of Sligo



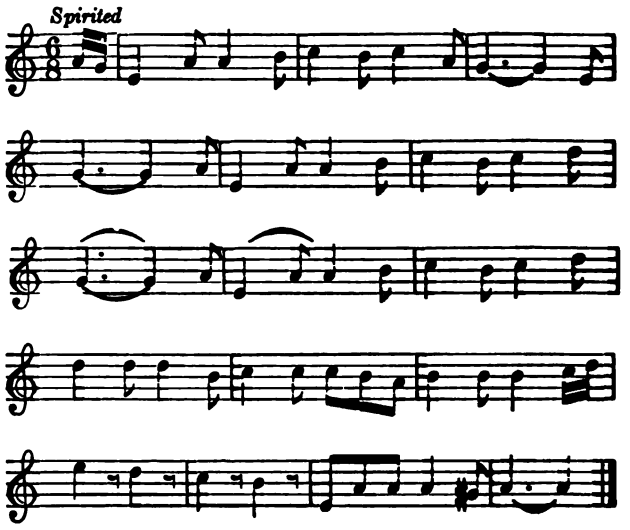
The Deserter's Meditation



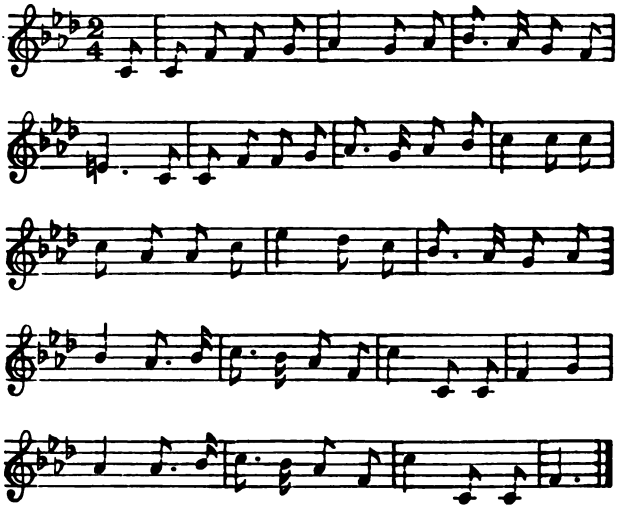
Oft in the Stilly Night



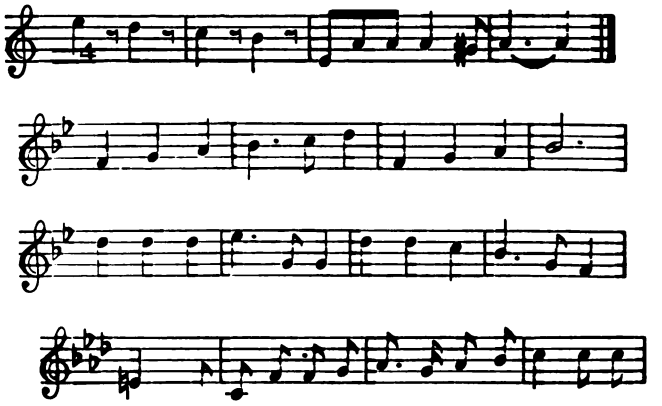
Johnny, I hardly knew you



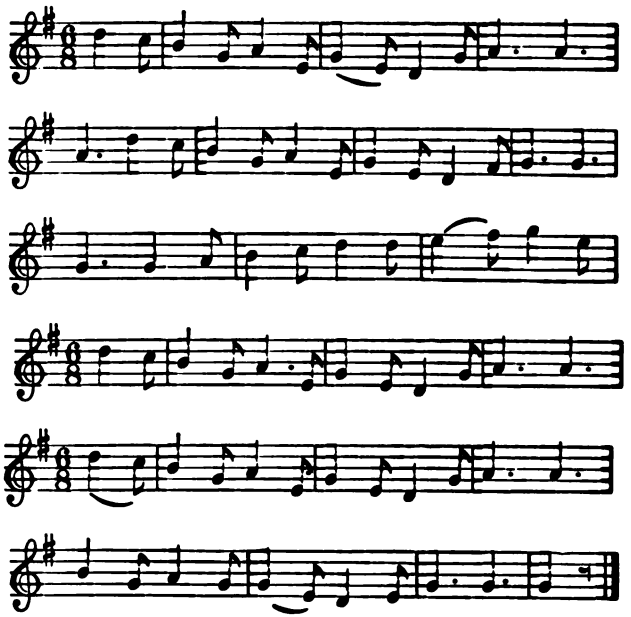
By Memory Inspired



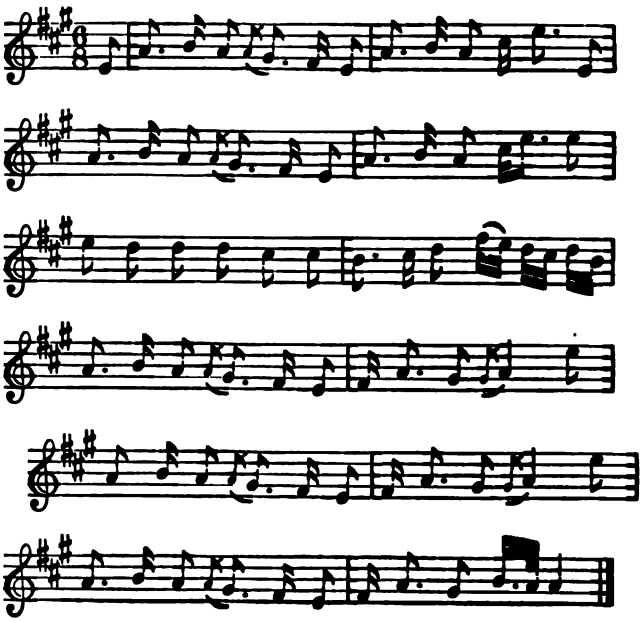
Eileen Aroon



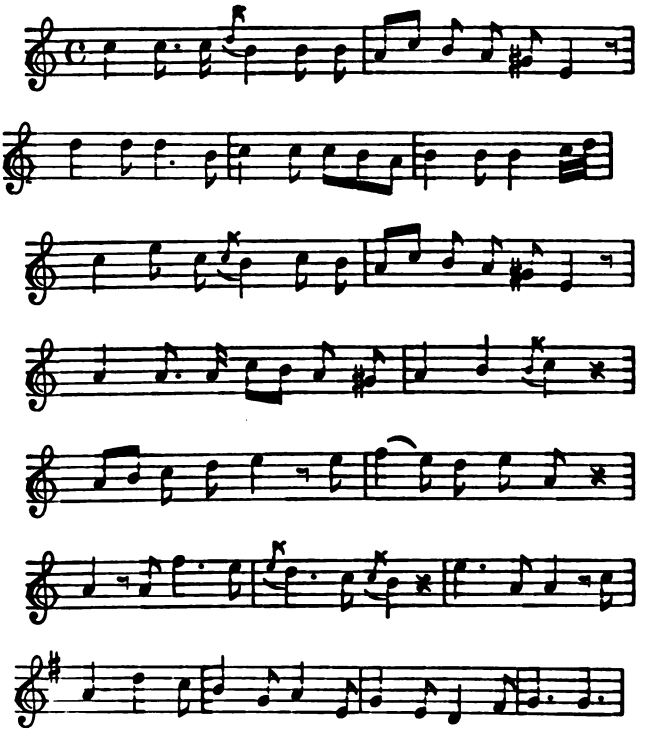
Air: "The Shan Van Vocht"



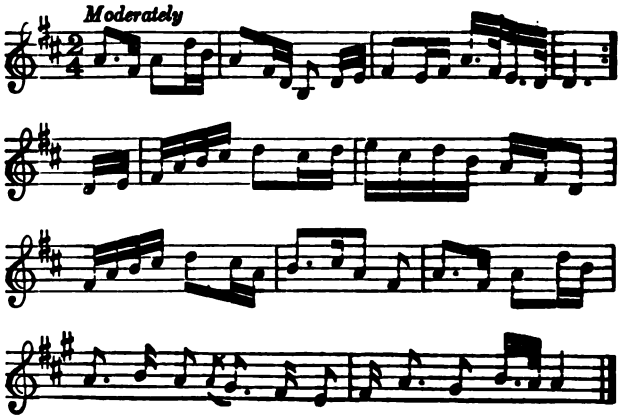
Air: "I saw from the beach"



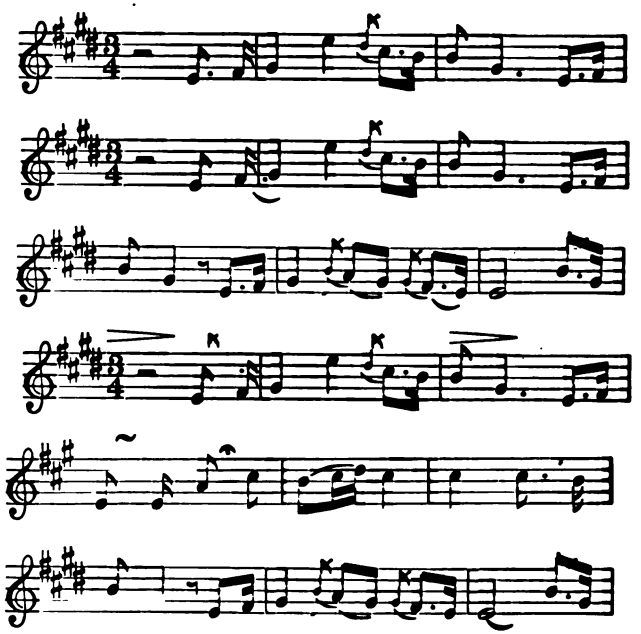
Air: "Silent, O Moyle"



An Spailin Fánach



Air: "The Last Rose of Summer"



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